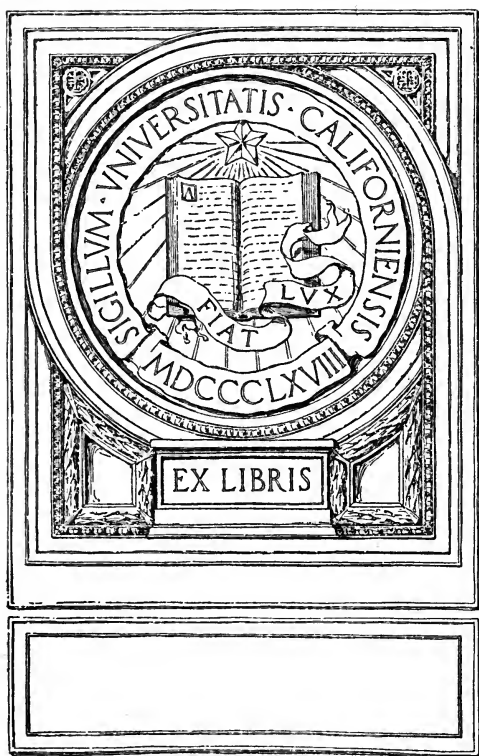


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THE GYPSY'S PARSON



PHOTO: BRIGHAM.

THE REV. GEORGE HALL.

THE GYPSY'S PARSON

HIS EXPERIENCES AND ADVENTURES

BY

THE REV. GEORGE HALL

RECTOR OF RUCKLAND, LINCOLNSHIRE

ILLUSTRATED



PHILADELPHIA

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112213
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TO VITAL
AIRBORNE

TO
MY WIFE
MY COMPANION
ON MANY A GYPSY-JAUNT

395343

"They cast the glamour o'er him."

"You must forgive us. We are barbarians. . . . We are ruffians of the sun . . . and we must be forgiven everything."

"It is easy to forgive in the sun," Domini said.

"Madame, it is impossible to be anything but lenient in the sun. That is my experience. . . . But, as I was saying, the sun teaches one a lesson of charity. When I first came to live in Africa in the midst of the sand-rascals—eh, Madame, I suppose as a priest I ought to have been shocked by their goings-on. And, indeed I tried to be, I conscientiously did my best, but it was no good. I couldn't be shocked. The sunshine drove it all out of me. I could only say, 'It is not for me to question le bon Dieu, and le bon Dieu has created these people and set them here in the sand to behave as they do. What is my business? I can't convert them. I can't change their morals—I must just be a friend to them, cheer them up in their sorrows, give them a bit if they're starving, doctor them a little—I'm a first-rate hand at making an Arab take a pill or a powder—when they are ill, and I make them at home with the white marabout.' That's what the sun has taught me, and every sand-rascal and sand-rascal's child in Amara is a friend of mine."

"You are fond of the Arabs, then?" she said.

"Of course I am, Madame. I can speak their language, and I'm as much at home in their tents, and more, than I ever should be at the Vatican—with all respect to the Holy Father."

(Conversation between Domini and Father Beret in *The Garden of Allah*, quoted here by the kind permission of Mr. Robert Hichens.)

PREFACE

Not a few writers have essayed to study the Gypsies in dusty libraries. I have companioned with them on fell and common, racecourse and fairground, on the turfy wayside and in the city's heart. In my book, which is a record of actual experiences, I have tried to present the Gypsies just as I have found them, without minimising their faults or magnifying their virtues. Most of the Gypsies mentioned in the following pages have now passed away, and of those who remain, many have, for obvious reasons, been renamed.

For the majority of the pictures adorning my book, I owe a profound debt of gratitude to my friend, Mr. Fred Shaw; also, for their kind permission to include several pictures in my "Romany Gallery," my cordial thanks are due to Mrs. Johnson, of Yatton, Rev. H. H. Malleeson, Mr. William Ferguson, Mr. T. J. Lewis, Mr. H. Stimpson, and Mr. F. Wilkinson.

The phonetics contained in this work are based upon a system invented by my friend, Mr. R. A. Scott Macfie, of the Gypsy Lore Society, whose innumerable kindnesses I most gratefully acknowledge.

G. H.

RUCKLAND RECTORY,
NEAR LOUTH,
LINCOLNSHIRE.

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THE GYPSY'S PARSON

CHAPTER I

GYPSY COURT—MY INITIATION INTO GYPSYDOM

A TANGLE of sequestered streets lying around a triple-towered cathedral ; red roofs and gables massed under the ramparts of an ancient castle ; a grey Roman arch lit up every spring-time by the wallflower's mimic gold ; an old-world Bailgate over whose tavern yards drifted the sleepy music of the minster chimes ; a crooked by-lane leading down to a wide common loved by the winds of heaven—these were the surroundings of my childhood's home in that hilltop portion of Lincoln which has never quite thrown off its medieval drowsiness.

Not far from my father's doorstep, as you looked towards the common, lay a narrow court lined with poor tenements, and terminating in a bare yard bounded by a squat wall. Every detail of this alley stands out in my memory with the sharpness of a photograph ; the cramped perspective of the place as you entered it from our lane, the dreary-looking

houses with their mud-floored living-rooms fronting upon the roadway, the paintless doors and windows, the blackened chimneys showing rakish against the sky, all combined to make a picture of dun-coloured misery. There were, it is true, a few redeeming features gilding the prevailing drabness of the scene. The entrance to the court had a southerly outlook upon green fields stretching up to the verge of the Castle Dyking, or, to revive its more gruesome name, "Hangman's Ditch," so called from the grim associations of a bygone day. From these fields a clean air blew through the court, rendering it a less unwholesome haunt for the strange folk who dwelt within its precincts; while not half a mile distant lay the breezy common, a glorious playground for the children of Upper Lincoln.

Seeing that this court and its denizens were destined in the order of things to make a profound impression upon my childish imagination, I may as well develop the picture rising so vividly before my mind's eye.

It was somewhere in the fifties of the last century, a few years, that is to say, before my entrance into the world, that several families of dark-featured "travellers" had pitched upon the court for their Gypsyry, a proceeding at which our quiet lane at first shrugged its shoulders, then focussed an interested gaze upon the intruders and their ways, and finally lapsed into an indulgent toleration of them. Thus from day to day throughout my early years, there might have been seen emerging from the recesses of

Gypsy Court swarthy men in twos and threes accompanied by the poacher's useful lurcher ; nut-brown girls with their black hair carelessly caught up in orange or crimson kerchiefs ; wrinkled crones smoking short clays, as gaily they drove forth in their rickety donkey-carts ; buxom mothers carrying babies slung, Indian fashion, across their shoulders, and bearing on their arms baskets replete with pegs, skewers, and small tin-ware of home manufacture. As for children, troops of the brown imps were generally in evidence, their eldritch shrieks rending the air between the portals of the little court and the gate opening upon the common.

No observer could possibly miss the fighting scenes and the ringing shouts which made the court echo again. A passionate folk are the Gypsies, a provoking word being at any time sufficient to call forth a blow. Even as I write these words, visions of gory fists and faces obtrude themselves through the mists of past days.

However, the Gypsies were never reported to be otherwise than polite towards the outsider who ventured into the alley. Diplomats rather than hooligans were they. "Let's 'eave 'alf a brick at 'im," is not the Gypsy's way with a stranger who happens to stroll into the camp. At the same time I would not have it imagined that the inhabitants of the squalid court were of the best black Romany breed ; far from it, they were mostly of diluted blood, else how came they to turn sedentary at all ? For

pure Gypsies (or *Romanitshelaw*, as they call themselves), the aristocrats of their race, abhor settled life, preferring to die on the road rather than wither inside four walls.

On the occasion of a horse fair in the city, our lane would resound with the clanging of hoofs beyond the ordinary, and in front of the taverns there was much rattling of whipstocks on the insides of hard hats, in order to enliven some weedy "screw," and so reward its owner for hours of patient "doctoring" in a corner well screened from prying eyes. Then when the autumnal rains set in, and the leaves began to flutter down in showers, there would come from afar the rumbling of Romany "homes on wheels," driven townwards by the oncoming of winter. To me it was always a saddening sight to watch the travel-stained wanderers hying to their winter quarters through miry streets heavy with mist and gloom. *Staruben sî gav* (town is a prison), an ancient vagabond was heard to remark on a like occasion.

A spectacle far more inspiriting was the departure of a Gypsy cavalcade from the city on a gay spring morning. For into the dingy purlieus where the travellers had wintered more or less cheerlessly, stray sunbeams and soft airs had begun to penetrate. Tidings had reached them that away in the open something had stirred, or called, or breathed along the furzy lanes and among the tree boughs, and forthwith every Romany sojourner within the ash-strewn yards of the city became eager to resume the

free, roving life of the roads. How often have I longed for the brush of an artist to depict the company of merry Gypsies—men, women, and bairns, horses, dogs, and donkeys, jingling pot-carts and living-wagons bedizened with new paint, starting from the top of our lane for the open country, just when the wind-rocked woods were burgeoning and every green hedge-bottom had a sprinkling of purple violets.

Now until my eleventh year I had seen no more than the mere outside of Romany life, and I might never have had any Gypsy experiences to relate but for a trivial blood-spilling, which, as I look back upon it, may well be called my initiation into Gypsydom. Indeed, the small incident I am about to mention had for me a most important result, insomuch as it made me akin to Gypsies for the rest of my life.

My earliest schools were dames' academies—there were two of these old-time institutions in our lane. Approached by a dark passage, the second of these had for its lecture-hall a large brick-floored room, whose presiding spirit was a dwarfish lady of sixty-five or more, before whom we sat in rows at long desks. The school consisted of about a score of children who were awed into subjection by a threatening rod of supple ash, half as long again as the tapering stick around which the scarlet-runners in your kitchen garden love to entwine themselves. This dread implement of discipline, reared in a recess near our mistress's desk, would oft descend upon the

head of a chattering boy or girl, and to the tip of that rod my own pate was no stranger.

Among my acquaintances at this school was a Gypsy girl whose parents dwelt at the sunny end of the aforementioned court. A year or two my senior, Sibby Smith was a shapely lass, having soft hazel eyes and a wealth of dark hair crowning an olive-tinted face. Lissom as whalebone, she had a pretty way of capering along the lanes with hedgerow berries or leaves of autumn's painting in her hair, and I, a silent, retiring boy, would watch her movements with admiring eyes. Fittingly upon that lithe form sat a garb of tawny-brown, with here a wisp of red and there a tag of yellow, mingled as on the wings of a butterfly. The girl had a harum-scarum brother, Snakey by name and slippery by nature, a little older than herself, with whom out of school hours she would be off and away searching the bushes for birds' nests, or ransacking the thickets for nuts; and one day in school I remember how she pulled out inadvertently with her handkerchief a catapult—a Gypsy can bring down a pheasant with the like—and falling with a clatter at our teacher's feet, the unholy weapon was straightway confiscated, whereat Sibby's face grew darker by a shade, as with her pen-nib she savagely stabbed the desk on which our copybooks were outspread. A roamer in all the copses and lanes around our city, and enjoying the freedom of the camps which tarried for little or for long in the old brickyards fringing the common, this schoolmate



PHOTO VALENTINE & SONS

A ROMANY LASS.

70 1900
1900-1901

of mine expressed the out-of-door spirit in her very gait, and as she pirouetted along the causeway, you caught from her flying figure the smell of wood smoke and the mossy odour of deep dingles.

In all the world it is hard to find the elusive Gypsy's compeer. Whimsical as the wind, and brimful of mischief as an elf of the wilds, Sibby was to me the embodiment of bewitching mystery. From a hillock by the hedge I have watched her seize a skittish pony by the mane and, leaping astride its back, gallop madly along a lane, to return a few moments later, breathless and dishevelled. This was her frolicsome mood.

Never very far below the surface of the Gypsy nature lurks a feeling of disdain, waxing fierce at times towards everything and everybody outside the Romany world. To this mood the Gypsy life appears to be the only life worth living, and the Gypsy is the only real man in the world. All other ways and all alien folk are suspect. There were times therefore when Sibby's eyes would pierce me through with arrows of detestation as though one had hailed from beneath the eaves of a constabulary. Yet the next day, every shred of this dark feeling would be flung to the winds, as under a scented may-bush the girl was romancing merrily or instructing me in the peculiar whistle giving warning of the approach of Velveteens or a policeman.

Is there in the whole bag of humanity, I wonder, a nut harder to crack than the Gypsy?

One afternoon in turning a corner sharply on my way home from school, it happened that I ran full tilt into Sibby Smith, and before I could say "Jack Robinson" I received such a blow on the mouth as sent me sprawling all my length on the road. There was, I suppose, something ludicrous in the sight of a prostrate boy with his legs in the air; so at least the girl seemed to think, for immediately she burst into laughter, and her merriment being ever of an infectious sort, I found myself laughing too, though inwardly I thought my punishment unmerited. A moment later, however, as I stood wiping the blood from my lips, the puzzle was explained. There in the dust lay a half-eaten, red-cheeked apple which the Gypsy had been munching when the shock of the collision sent it flying from her hand; hence the blow that descended upon me so swiftly. Nor after the lapse of nearly forty years have I forgotten the forceful stroke that laid me low on that autumn afternoon.

On stormy days, when the loud-lunged gusts made a fanfaronade in the chimney-stacks at home, it was my delight as a boy to seek the brow of the grassy escarpment overlooking our common, and at that time I knew nothing more glorious than a tussle with the wind roaring over the hilltop. Leaping on the springy turf, hatless and bare-armed, fighting a make-believe giant of sonorous voice, what high glee of spirit was mine!

In those days the escarpment boasted a row of windmills, old-fashioned structures, built partly of

timber and partly of brick and stone, and loud was the whirring of sails thereabouts in a brisk wind. At the head of a cleft in the hillside, known as "Hobbler's Hole," was a mill which had fallen into desuetude, and its great sails, shattered by a tempest, lay in tangled heaps on the thistle-grown plot around the building. To the tall thistles, tufted with downy seed, came goldfinches, dainty little fellows, shy as fairies. Hitherward came also visitors of another kind, for, as might be expected, the unwritten invitation to such a harvest of firewood had duly spread to Gypsy Court. More than once in the twilight Sibby got me to help her in carrying off fragments of timber, and to a boy with *Tiger Tom the Pirate* secreted in the lining of his jacket, these small adventures were not without a tang of the picaresque. As time went on, the door in the basement of the mill and most of the window-frames were dragged piecemeal from their places to boil Gypsy kettles, but there still remained the massive ladder giving access to the dusty chambers wherein nestled the strangest of shadows. Every youngster who came to play in Hobbler's Hole knew quite well that the mill was haunted. Readily enough we climbed the worm-eaten ladder in broad daylight, and scampered about the resounding floors, or sat at the frameless windows pelting bits of plaster at the jackdaws flitting to and fro, but to think of invading the mouldering mill in the dusk hour when hollow and common were visioned away into shadowy night was another

matter. Ah, then the mill took on an eeriness befitting a very borderland of goblin-dom.

Picturing the crumbling ruin and the wrinkled declivity dipping below it towards the common, I recall how Snakey Smith said one day to me, "I likes to sit afore a fire on the ground. You don't feel nothing like so lonesome as you keeps pushing sticks into the fire and watching 'em burn away." The words aptly express a Gypsy's joy in a fire for its own sake, regardless of utilitarian considerations. At the moment there may be no kettle waiting to be boiled, no black stockpot demanding to be slung on the crooked kettle-prop, yet, for the pure pleasure of the thing, a Gypsy will light a small pile of dead sticks, and, lounging near, will gaze wistfully at the spiral of thin, sweet smoke upcurling between the trees in the lane.

Without a doubt, if "you's been a bit onlucky," or, if your sky is cloudy with sorrow, there is solace in a fire, as in a folk-tale and in the voice of a violin. Did not Provost M'Cormick, lawyer and lover of Gypsies, find his Border Tinklers, amid their brown tents and shaggy "cuddies," reciting traditional tales to banish gloom? "Whenever he saw me dull he wad say, 'Come on, Mary, and I'll tell ye a fairy tale,' and wi' his gestures, girns, and granes, he wadna be lang till he had us a' roarin'."

A Gypsy who resided in a derelict railway carriage on a Cheshire common, having lost a dear child, refused to be comforted and even declined to take

food. To his old fiddle he confided his grief, his body swaying to and fro as he drew forth plaintive airs from the strings.

Wandering one evening in cowslip-time below the decrepit windmill, I came to a stile in the hedge, and, passing into the lane, I found Sibby and Snakey heaping dead wood upon a fire on the margin of the common.

"There!" exclaimed the Gypsy girl, "I know'd somebody was a-thinking of me, 'cos my boots kept coming unlaced."

"Well, well, you made me jump, *baw* (mate), you did," put in her brother. "How did you *jin* we were *akai*?" (know we were here).

"See," said I, "what a pother you are making. I caught a whiff of your smoke right on top of the hill."

With that I dropped down beside the fire, and, yielding the soul to the witchery of red-gold flames dancing against the dark, it was easy enough to glide into the realm of Faerie. Sibby, who had been lying at full length before the fire, now gathered herself into a cross-legged posture, and, lapsing into meditation, sat twisting a black elf-lock round her forefinger. A touch of the "creepy" world seemed also to have fallen upon Snakey, for he lay in silence staring into the beyond as though he had sighted fairy faces peering between the brier sprays; or was it that the knotted tree-bole leaning from the hedge had begun to make grimaces? At last the boy awoke with a

start. By his side lay a maiden ash-plant with numerous hearts and rings neatly cut on its green bark, and, whipping out a knife, he proceeded to add further touches to his *kosht* (stick). This led me to talk of my own achievement of that day in carving my initials on a beech tree not far from where we were sitting. Whereat Sibby remarked—

“Why, it was only last week that me and mother went in our cart past Dalton Brook, and we pulled up to look at the old tree what has *dui vastaw* (two hands) cut into it by Orferus Herren, and there they were right enough. It was his brother Evergreen who broke his neck by tumbling headlong into a stone-pit, wasn’t it, Snakey?”

“For sure it was, *pen* (sister), and our uncles Fennix and Euri were well-nigh killed the same way right up agen Scotland, as I’ve heard dad say times and agen.”

“How was that?” I asked.

Then followed Snakey’s story, which, as well as I remember, ran (in his own words) something like this—

“One night my uncles Fennix and Euri was crossing a moor among the mountains, a long way up into the North Country. They’d been sitting all the day in a *kitshima* (tavern) and at last they begins to think it were time to be marching to their stopping-place, some five miles away across the moor, a very nasty country with deep pits and ponds in it. It was getting dark and the teeny stars were shining above the mountains. Well, my uncles made off

with a deal of bustle at first along a beaten track, but after going a mile or two, down comes a fog—a clear thick 'un it was—and they soon got off the path and were lost. It looked like 'em having to *besk avré* (lie out) all night, as poor Jacob did. Only my uncles didn't see no silver ladder with angels dancing up and down on it, and *mi dîri Duvel* (God) sitting atop of it. But just as they were about dead beat after poddling up and down for I can't tell you how long, they walked as nigh as nothing over the edge of a deep pit. It were a narrow shave, for they only managed to save theirselves by clutching at the bushes atop of the pit. Then what do you think, *baw*? They just turned round, and there afore 'em stood a terrible crittur rearing itself up and groaning loud. Their hearts was in their mouths. They thought their time had come.

“‘If that ain't a *mulo* (ghost), my name's not Fennix,' whispered my uncle.

“‘*Keka*' (No); 'it's the wery *Beng* (Devil) hisself,' says Euri.

“And there they stands a-dithering like leaves, till at last my uncle Fennix pulls hisself together and walks on a yard or two, staring hard afore him, and weren't Euri glad above a bit to hear his brother say in his nat'ral voice, 'Come on, it's nobbut a blessed *dunnock* (steer) after all.' And with that the crittur kicked up its heels and galloped away, and by a bit of luck my uncles stumbled right on to a cart-way as led 'em straight to the tents.”

Among Gypsies, when the tale-telling mood is on, story will follow story, often until drowsiness supervenes; for these folk dearly love a tale, and are themselves possessed of no small store of family legends and folk-narratives.

"Now, it's your turn, sister. Let's have that tale about Old Ruzlam Boz'll's boy."

Without stopping for a moment to think, Sibby began to reel off what was evidently a well-known and favourite story, punctuating her sentences by picking from her gown and flinging at me sundry prickly balls of burdock seed, telling of what prowlings in the woods!

"It's donkey's ears (*i.e.* long years) since Ruzlam Boz'll's wife had a baby boy born'd in a tent near a spring what bubbled out betwixt two rocks, and every summer they used to *besh* (rest) by the same spring. By and by, when the dear little boy grew big enough, his mammy sent him every morning to fill the kettle. But one day he got a surprise. There on the grass by the spring what should he see but a new silver shilling. Of course he picked it up and put it into his pocket, and never said nothing about it when he got back to the tent. Next morning he found double the money at the spring-head, and so it went on until his pockets were chinking full of silver, and for all that he never breathed no word about his luck. But one day Old Ruzlam heard the boy rattling the money in his pockets, and forced him to tell where he

got it from. Next morning the daddy went off, laughing to himself and thinking of the nice heap of silver he was going to pick up, but after he had looked up and down and all over, he found just nothing at all, leastways he saw no money; but as he stood scratting his head, puzzled-like, there, on one side of the spring, he saw a dear little teeny old man, and on the other side a dear little teeny old woman, and, saying never a word, they stooped down and flung water right into Ruzlam's eyes. So away he ran home, and there, if he didn't find his boy had gone cross-eyed. What's more, he never came right agen."

Thus, by pleasant steps amid scenes not lacking in glamour, I advanced little by little in my knowledge of these fascinating straylings with whom no stranger ever yet found it easy to mingle as one of themselves.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERS OF THE COURT—READING BORROW

A FEW miles outside my native city, there stands on the bank of the Roman Fossdyke a lonely house known as "Drinsey Nook," formerly a tavern with bowling greens, swings, and skittle alleys, a resort of wagonette and boating parties out for a frolic in the sunshine. Often on bygone summer eves have I loitered about the old inn gleaming white amid its guardian trees, but best of all I loved to see the beechen boughs drop their fiery leaves upon its mossy roof in the fading of the year.

To-day, as of yore, the brown-sailed barges, laden with grain or scented fir-planks, glide lazily past the place, and a motor-boat will at times go racing by, to the alarm of the waterhens which had almost come to look on the sleepy canal as their own.

Does it ever dream of its gay past, I wonder—this old forgotten house fronting upon the rush-fringed waterway?

One golden October morning, my father, who had a passion for boating on our local waters, hired a small sailing craft, and, the breezes aiding us,

we were wafted along the Fossdyke as far as the said riparian house of call. Hour after hour we wandered in the beech woods stretching behind the inn, resting now on some protruding snag or fallen bole to watch the squirrels at play, and again pushing our way breast-high through sheets of changing bracken to the hazel thickets where the nuts hung in clusters well within reach of our hooked sticks.

Linked with this ramble in the time of the falling leaves is an impression I have never forgotten. "Look," said my father, pointing to a decayed stump of a post almost buried amid dank moss, "this is all that remains of Tom Otter's gibbet-tree." I shuddered as he told how in other days he had heard the chains clanking in the wind, and he went on to relate that *his* father was among the crowd of citizens who, starting from Lincoln Castle one March morning in the year 1806, followed the murderer's corpse until it was hanged in irons on a post thirty feet high on Saxilby Moor. For several days after the event, the vicinity of the gibbet resembled a country fair with drinking booths, ballad singers, Gypsy fiddlers, and fortune-tellers.

The impressions of childhood are enduring; and just as the smell of the wallflowers after an April shower will revive for you, dear fellow, the vision of a garden walk under a lichened wall, and the dainty step of your lady love by your side, so for me the wild scent of withering bracken in the red

autumn glades prompts my fancy to envisage anew the gruesome scene as depicted by my father on that October day long gone by. Nor is this all.

To mention the name of Tom Otter is to call up for me more than one swarthy inhabitant of Gypsy Court who lived to make old bones and sit by the fire telling tales and smoking black tobacco. I have but to close my eyes to behold a procession of these "characters" straggling out of the dark court, their faces and figures lingering for a moment in memory's beam of light, then passing again into the shadows. And what strange stories are wrapped up in the names and lives of some of these folk; quaint comedy, grim tragedy, riotous passion, tales of love, laughter, and tears.

There was old Tom, nicknamed "Tom o' the Gibbet," whose patronymic was *Petulengro*, which is Gypsy for Smith.

Each of the great Romany clans, be it known, duplicates its surname, one form being used before the *gawjê* (non-Gypsies, aliens); the other form, of cryptic import, is for the brotherhood of the blood.

Old Tom Petulengro, further known as "Sneezing Tommy," owing to his liking for snuff, carried on a thriving trade in wooden meat-skewers and pegs, and in his backyard you might see him with infinite patience cutting up willow rods or splitting blocks of close-grained elder-wood; and for years I never used to hear in church the familiar words of the Psalmist, "Our bones lie strewn before the pit, like

as when one heweth wood upon the earth," without seeing that narrow yard with its shining axe lying midst a litter of chips and splinters. Elder-wood is still in request for meat-skewers, and to this day not a few country butchers prefer to use the Gypsy-made article. Old Tom used to say, with a twinkle in his eye, that he *found* nearly all his raw material on his journeys up and down the countryside. For, as you could not fail to observe, it was a habit with some of the dwellers in Gypsy Court to absent themselves periodically with their light carts and tents. Halcyon days were those for the court Gypsies.

Let it be remembered that the County Council legend, "No camping allowed," had not yet begun to hit you in the eye from among the bramble brakes on bits of wayside waste. The rural constable of that time had not the conveniences his successor enjoys in the bicycle and the village telephone. There were farmers who still retained a soft place in their hearts for the Gypsy, and many a country squire viewed the nomads of the grassy lanes with a kindly eye. If a carriage-horse grew restive in passing a roadside fire at twilight, up from the hedge-bottom sprang an obliging fellow who led the animal safely along and thereby won a cheery word from the squire or his lady. Even Velveteens would hob-nob with the jovial campers on the lord's waste, and, quaffing a dram from their black bottle, would toss a rabbit into the lap of a Romany mother and go on his way.

Here and there of course were tiresome believers in the hoary policy of harassment and oppression—

“Pack, and be out of this forthwith,
D’you know you have no business here?
‘No, we hain’t got,’ said Samuel Smith,
‘No business to be anywhere.’
So wearily they went away,
Yet soon were camped in t’other lane,
And soon they laughed as wild and gay,
And soon the kettle boiled again.”

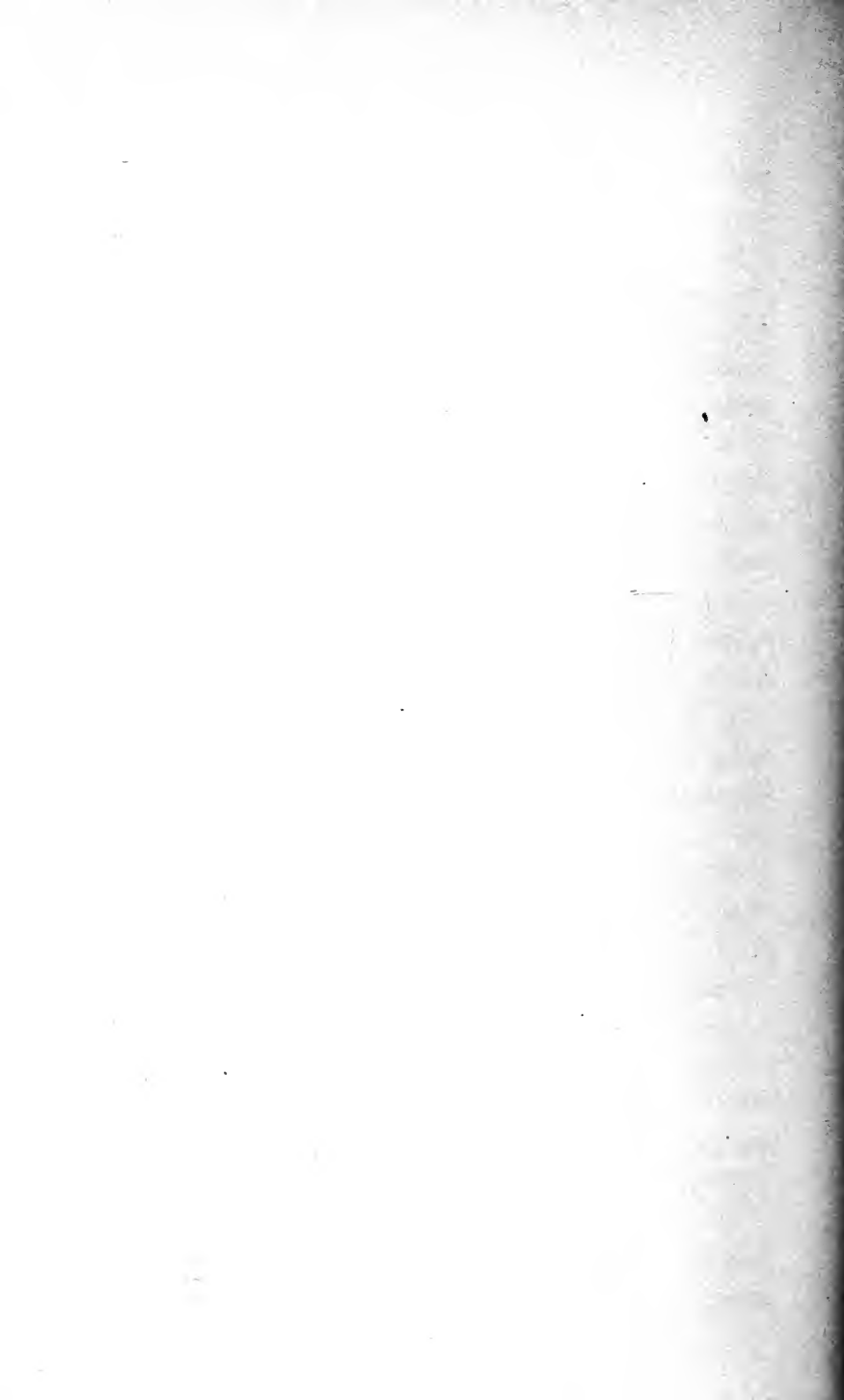
Reverting to Tom Petulengro’s sobriquet, I confess it provoked my curiosity not a little. Tom o’ the *Gibbet*—what could the strange “tag” mean? Time passed, even a few years, and one day its origin came to light during a talk with Ashena Brown, Tom’s married sister, an elderly Gypsy with a furrowed countenance and deep-set eyes which flashed with fire as she grew excited in her talk. I can see her bowed figure and long jetty curls, as in fancy I again stoop to enter the low-ceiled abode in the smoky court where I listened to her chatter to the persistent accompaniment of a donkey’s thump, thump, in an adjoining apartment.

“Wonderful fond o’ the County o’ Nottingham was my people,” said the old lady. “They know’d every stick and stone along the Trentside, and i’ the Shirewood (Sherwood), and many’s the time we’ve stopped at Five Lane Ends nigh Drinsey Nook. Why, my poor dear mammy (Lord rest her soul) was once fired at by a foot-pad as she were coming outen the public upo’ the bank there. The



PHOTO-FRED SLAW.

THE CAMP IN THE LANE



man's pistol had nobbut powder in it, for he only meant to *trash* (frighten) her into handing up her *lova* (money), but she had none about her, for her last *shukora* (sixpence) had gone in *levina* (ale). And after that, my mammy allus wore a big *diklo* (kerchief) round her head for to hide her cheek as were badly blued by the rascal's powder.

"Ay, and I minds how my daddy used to make teeny horseshoes, knife handles, and netting needles, outen the bits o' wood he *tshin'd* (cut) off the gibbet post, and wery good oak it was. Mebbe you's heard o' Tom Otter's post nigh to the woods? Ah, but p'r'aps you's never been tell'd that our Tom was born'd under it? The night my mammy were took bad, our tents was a'most blown to bits. The wind banged the old irons agen the post all night long, as I've heard her say. And when they wanted to name the boy, they couldn't think of no other name but Tom, for sure as they tried to get away from it, the name kept coming back again—Tom, Tom, Tom—till it sort o' dinned itself into their heads. So at last my daddy says, 'Let's call him Tom and done with it,' and i' time, folks got a-calling him Tom o' the Gibbet, and it stuck to him, it did. There, now, I must give that here *maila* (donkey) a bite o' summut."

But I have not done with Tom Otter.

Here is a story even more "creepy" than the last. Ashena is again the speaker. "I' them days I'd some delations as did funny things that folks

wouldn't never think o' doing nowadays. I'd an uncle as used to talk to the *Beng* (Devil). If any-thing went wrong wi' a hoss, he'd say, '*Beng*, do this, and *Beng*, do that,' like we talks to the *Duvel* (God) when we says 'ur prayers. But he weren't eddicated, you see, he didn't know no better. And whenever uncle and aunt used to pass by Tom Otter's gibbet, they'd stop and look up at the poor man hanging there, and they allus *wuser'd* (threw) him a bit o' *hawben* (food). They couldn't let themselves go by wi'out doing that.

"And there was a baker from Harby, and whenever he passed by the place he would put a bread loaf on to the pointed end of a long rod and shove it into that part o' the irons where poor Tom's head was, and sure enough the bread allus went. The baker got hisself into trouble for doing that, as I've heard our old people say."

Commenting on a parallel instance, occurring about the year 1779, in which some women were wont to throw up to a gibbeted man a bunch of tallow candles for him to eat, the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, in his *Book of Folk-Lore*, writes: "Obviously the idea was still prevalent that life continued to exist in the body after execution."

In the procession of "characters" issuing from the dark court, I see two familiar figures, the parents of my Gypsy schoolmate, who would surely have arrested even a stranger's gaze.

Partly from age, and partly from the habit of

his calling, Plato Smith the tinman stooped somewhat, yet his legs, which were long in comparison with his body, carried him over the ground fast enough. A nearer view of the old man's countenance revealed certain scars concerning which tales were told to his credit as a fighter. True, he had on one occasion been worsted by an adversary, for the bridge of his nose diverged somewhat from the straight line, a record of a telling blow. Always alert, Plato looked the picture of spryness when soap and water had removed all traces of the workshop, and he had donned a green cutaway coat, a bright yellow neck-cloth, and a felt "hat of antique shape," high in the crown and broad of brim, which was pulled well over his eyes whenever he went out. It was whispered that none knew better than he how to whistle a horse out of a field, but in this art I fancy he had grown rusty of late years. To be sure, his long record as a poacher had brought him occasional lodgments in the local house of detention, yet so ingrained was this Gypsy habit that he could hardly refrain from chalking his gun-barrel and sallying forth on moon-lit nights.

A riverside incident associated with Sibby's father is as fresh in my memory as if it happened but yesterday. A stream neither broad nor deep is our homely Witham, crawling onward through fenny flats to the North Sea. It was here that I learned on summer days to pull an oar in an old black coble, and to glide steel-shod over the ice in the Christmas

holidays. Along a certain reach of the river, I was initiated by an elder brother into the mysteries of angling on those tranquil evenings when the bold perch showed their heads above water, like the fishes that listened to St. Anthony's sermon. Now it fell upon a day that my brother and I were crossing the river by ferry-boat, a few miles outside the city, our companions being Plato Smith and an ecclesiastic from the minster-close—four happy anglers were we. At one end of the flat-bottomed ferry-boat stood the parson fingering his rod and whistling a lively tune, when, in midstream, there was a sudden hitch in the chain, flinging the perspiring ferryman upon his face, and at the same time precipitating our friend from the minster-close headlong into the river. Never have I seen a wild duck, or a white-pate coot, disappear more cleanly from sight than did our brother of "the cloth" into the liquid element. Thanks mainly to Gypsy Plato's resourcefulness, he was extricated pretty quickly, and we left him in the care of an inn-keeper, in whose parlour at dusk we met him in borrowed raiment, looking more than usually pallid of countenance beneath the broad eaves of our kindly host's old-fashioned Sunday "topper" padded to fit with a vivid red handkerchief.

A personality even more striking was Plato's consort, Abigail, as you saw her sunning herself under the parapet of the Witham bridge hard by the "Three Magpies" Inn, her black eyes blinking as a gust from the river flapped the loose ends of her

gay kerchiefs which she wore three or four deep, meeting on her bosom in old-time style. Hooked like a falcon's beak, her nose drooped over her pursed lips towards a prominent chin, giving her a witch-like mien. Quadrupled strings of corals encircled her wizened neck, and a black velvet bodice bedecked with silver buttons, a skirt of bold check pattern, and a poke-bonnet formed her customary walking attire. Often, on her homeward way after her daily round with the basket, have I met her puffing a small black pipe as she shuffled along our lane. By *didakais* (half-breeds) she was certainly feared, and they maintained it was bad luck to meet her first thing of a morning, and were known to turn back on seeing her in the street. "Her eyes make you feel that queer" was a common saying, and it follows that she ranked high as a fortune-teller. Seldom a fair passed but you met her in the noisy throng, chaffing the *gawjê* (gentiles), or surrounded by a group of village Johnnies and Mollies eager to have their palms read. What a picture she made as she stooped to tighten the girths of her shaggy donkey at whose head stood the wild, dusky Sibby with a spring wind whisking her black locks about her cheeks, out on the open road beyond the town, for maid and mother were devoted companions on many a foray into the villages dotted over Lincoln Heath.

Another conspicuous character of the court was a quaint little hunchback, a pedlar by trade, whose

sad deformity and resentful temper caused him to become the butt of every street gamin's joke. He would often be seen in company with Sammy Noble, a wooden-legged vendor of firewood. The pair, I regret to say, called too frequently at taverns, and more than once I have seen them assisted home by kindly policemen, or "peelers," as they were then called, who if resurrected to-day in their long black coats and chimney-pot hats, would surely be taken for nothing short of cathedral dignitaries.

The hero of the Gypsy colony was a tall athletic fellow, "Soldier" 'Plisti (or Supplistia) Boswell, who also bore the nickname of "Jumping Jack," of whom I give a reminiscence or two here.

One day a country squire was driving a pony chaise along a lane, and, rounding a corner, he came upon a ring of Gypsies roasting hedgehogs. Imagine his astonishment to see a slender lad spring up, and, running a few yards, take a flying leap clear over the pony's back, a feat so pleasing to the squire that he called the boy to his side and, presenting him with a bright crown-piece, offered—so the tale runs—"to keep him like a gentleman for life." In return for which kindness, the Gypsy was expected to disown his people, a condition which was not jumped at by Jack.

'Plisti's home in Gypsy Court was one day the scene of a singular incident. A fox closely pursued by the hounds dashed through the open door of the living-room, where before the fire lay the Gypsy

asleep and snoring. Reynard in his haste managed to sweep the sleeper's face with his brush; and mighty was the yell that burst from 'Plisti's throat on being thus disturbed, causing the fox to seek refuge in a hovel hard by, where the dogs fell upon him. A brother of mine who was in the court at the time obtained possession of the brush, and the trophy was given a conspicuous place in our home.

In those days it was no unusual course for the Gypsy lads to enlist in the Militia, and 'Plisti looked every inch a soldier as he marched homeward from the morning's drill on the common. In play he would level his musket at you, and laugh like a merry boy, if you caught his spirit and made believe that you were wounded. If he was proud of his scarlet jacket, his characteristic Gypsy vanity led him to glory in shirts of dyes so resplendent that in comparison the vaunted multi-coloured coat of Joseph would indeed have been thrown into the shade.

The Gypsy spell cast upon me in childhood was now reinforced by my discovery of the autobiographical writings of George Borrow. It was in my teens that I devoured *Lavengro* in its original three-volume form. By taper-light in an attic bedroom at home, or in some hollow on the common where the battered race-cards whitened the base of the gorse bushes—our old common is the annual scene of the Lincolnshire Handicap—I thrilled over the boy Borrow's encounter with the Gypsies in the

green lane at Norman Cross. I followed him through the crowded horse-fair at Norwich, and into the smoky tents pitched upon Mousehold Heath. But the episode which impressed me most of all was the fight with the Flaming Tinman. The *dramatis personæ* of that narrative would pursue me even into my dreams. *The Romany Rye*, with its vivid picture of Horncastle Fair, was pleasant enough reading, though not nearly so fascinating as *Lavengro*. Little did I think that the coming days were to bring some of Borrow's originals within my ken.

How far Borrow's Gypsies are portraits of individuals, and to what extent we are able to identify them, are questions which have often been asked. Don Jorge would probably have denied the charge of individual portraiture, yet there is no doubt that he had definite prototypes in his mind's eye when penning his narratives. Just as in *Guy Mannering*, Sir Walter Scott portrayed an actual Jean Gordon under the name of Meg Merrilies, so we know that Borrow has given us his old friend Ambrose Smith under the now famous cognomen of "Jasper Petulengro," a fact made plain by Dr. Knapp in his monumental work¹ familiar to all Gypsy students. Shortly before his death at Dunbar in October, 1878, Ambrose Smith and his wife Sanspirela (a Heron before marriage), together with their family, had been noticed and befriended by Queen Victoria. To

¹ *The Life, Writings, and Correspondence of George Borrow*, by Prof. Wm. I. Knapp. London, 1899.



A DAUGHTER OF "JASPER PETULENGRO."

[To face p. 28.]



wit: the following entry in *More Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands*.

"August 26th, 1878. — At half-past three started with Beatrice, Leopold, and the Duchess in the landau, and four, the Duke, Lady Ely, General Ponsonby, and Mr. Yorke, going in the second carriage, and Lord Haddington riding all the way. We drove through the west part of Dunbar, which was very full, and we were literally pelted with small nosegays, till the carriage was full of them; then for some distance past the village of Belheven, Knockendale Hill, where were stationed in their best attire the queen of the gipsies, an oldish woman [Sanspirela] with a yellow handkerchief on her head, and a youngish, very dark, and truly gipsy-like woman in velvet and a red shawl, and another woman. The queen is a thorough gipsy, with a scarlet cloak and a yellow handkerchief around her head. Men in red hunting-coats, all very dark, and all standing on a platform here, bowed and waved their handkerchiefs."

In the seventh chapter of *The Romany Rye*, Borrow tells how he one day got his dinner "entirely off the body of a squirrel which had been shot the day before by a chal of the name of Pirus, who, besides being a good shot, was celebrated for his skill in playing on the fiddle."

Nieces of Pirus Gray, whom I know, have testified to their uncle's excellence as a marksman, and on the authority of Sinfai, a daughter of Pirus,

I have been told that Ambrose Smith's praise of her father's fiddling was well founded.

"About a week ago my people and myself" (the speaker is Ambrose, *i.e.* Jasper Petulengro) "were encamped on a green by a plantation in the neighbourhood of a great house. In the evening we were making merry, the girls dancing, while Piramus was playing on the fiddle a tune of his own composing, to which he had given his own name, Piramus of Rome, and which is much celebrated amongst our people, and from which I have been told one of the grand gorgio composers who once heard it has taken several hints."

The gifted fiddler was at that time only a slim fellow of twenty-eight summers. Long years afterwards, when Piramus was a very old man and I a youth of twenty, I remember seeing him in our Lincolnshire town of Louth, where he was still tapping with his tinker's hammer and fondling his violin in his cottage at the River Head. A story which the old man never tired of telling was that of his brother Jack's heroism.

Upon a day, many years ago, the children of Piramus were boating on a river, and, their craft capsizing, all were flung into the stream. Jack, who happened to be on the bank, leaped in and saved all but two, the oldest and the youngest, who were drowned. In his day Piramus had excelled as a fighter, and certainly the knotty fists of the aged tinman looked as if they had done service in the bruising line.

Two visitors who loved to cheer the last days of Piramus were his daughter Sinfai and her husband, Isaac Heron, who have themselves now passed away. Whenever I think of the tall figure of Old Isaac, I recall one evening in the summer of 1876, when a camp of the Herons lay just outside of Lincoln. What appeared to be a Gypsy trial was in progress, and I remember the inward thrill on beholding those Herons in a ring, chattering like a flock of daws. Inside the circle stands a young man, bare-headed, stripped of coat and vest, and gesticulating wildly. Now he flings his arms about, and now he thrusts his fingers through his shaggy black hair. On his brow the sweat stands in beads. I can hear the name "Wilhelmina," as it comes in a piercing shriek from his lips. The old men and women are muttering together as calmly they look on. In that throng were Isaac and Sinfai, along with some of the older Yorkshire Herons, Golias, Khulai, and others.

In after years I came to know very intimately many members of the clan Heron, and among them a niece of that weird old hag, Mrs. Herne (to use Borrow's spelling of the name), who sent the poisoned cake to Lavengro in Mumper's Dingle.

Having had a romantic interest in the Gypsies aroused in me thus early, I naturally looked forward to the days when I should leave home and meet the people of the *kawlo rat* (black blood) in other parts of the country.

CHAPTER III

NORTH-COUNTRY GYPSIES

A TYPICAL colliery village in a bleak northern county was the scene of my first curacy. Silhouettes of ugliness were its black pit buildings, dominated by a mountain of burning refuse exhaling night and day a poisonous breath which tarnished your brass candlesticks and rendered noxious the "long, unlovely street" of the parish. What in the name of wisdom induced me to pitch my tent in such a spot, I can scarcely say at this distance of time, unless perhaps it was a mad desire to rub against something rough and rude after having been reared in the drowsy atmosphere of pastoral Lincolnshire.

But if the picture which met my gaze on parochial rounds possessed no inspiring feature, you may take my word for it that the setting of the picture was undeniably charming. Close at hand lay the valley of the Wear, by whose brown and amber waters, broken by frequent beds of gravel, I used to wander, trout-rod in hand, or, wading ankle-deep in bluebells, I added to my store of nature-knowledge by observing the ways of the wood-folk—the tawny squirrel on his fir-bough, the red-polled woodpecker hammering at a

decayed elm-branch, or a lank heron standing stiff as a stake on the margin of a pool.

Across the airy uplands at the back of the village runs a road which was ever a favourite walk of mine. Away in the distance, Durham's towers lift their grey stones, and nearer across the fields, "like a roebuck at bay," rises the castle, which together with the lordship of Brancepeth, Geoffrey, grandson of the Norman Gilbert de Nevil, received as dowry with Emma Bulmer, his Saxon bride. Right well I came to know the weathered walls of Brancepeth Castle, where in fancy I used to hear the blare of bugle (*not the motor-horn*), and to a dreamer it is still a place where "the swords shine and the armour rings."

One June day I took the byway over the hills, and as I leaned upon a gate looking towards the castle, a sound of wheels not far off was heard on the gritty roadway, and from round the corner a party of Gypsies hove in sight. There were two or three carts bearing the name of Watland, with several comely people aboard, and lagging in the rear came a pair of shaggy colts, whipped up by a shock-headed lad of fifteen. When I greeted these wanderers, they drew rein and descended from the carts, and standing there in the sunshine on the road, they appeared to me more than anything like a gang of prehistoric folk risen from some tumulus on the moor; features, garments, horses, vehicles—all were tintured with Mother Earth's reds and browns picked up from wild heaths, clay-pits, and sandy lanes. To my mind the

sight was an agreeable variation from the daily procession of miners so black with coal-dust that you could not for the life of you distinguish Bill from Bob, or Jack from Jerry.

"Are you stopping about here?" I asked, after an exchange of salutations.

"Yes; come and see us to-night on top o' the moor. We'll be fixed up by then." Turning to his wife, the leader of the party said—

"Ay, doesn't he remind you of that young priest up yonder by Newcastle, what used to come and take a cup of tea with us?"

There was something about these Watlands which impressed me. Although obviously poor, they were light-hearted—I had caught the lilt of a song before they came in sight. A blithesome spirit of acceptance, a serenity drawn from Nature's bosom was theirs, and I could imagine them whistling cheerily as they bent their heads to buffeting storms.

"Take no thought for the morrow," is the Gypsy's own philosophy. Were real road-folk ever able to tell you the route of the morrow's itinerary? Break of day will be time enough to discuss the next stage of the journey.

Sundown's fires burned redly behind the black pines, as I found myself on the moor, a wide expanse tracked by little paths worn by passing feet, a haunt of whin-chats, grasshoppers, and bright-eyed lizards—sun-lovers all.

Knowing the whimsicalities of the Gypsy nature,

I had half expected to draw a blank after dawdling through the afternoon at Brancepeth Castle. I wondered whether my luck would be the same as on a past occasion whereon it happened that down a green lane I had located a picturesque lot of Gypsies who might almost have stepped straight out of a Morland canvas, and most anxious I was to secure a few snapshots, but unfortunately my camera had been left at home.

"You'll be here all day, I expect?"

"To be sure we shall, my *rai*, you'll find us here *koliko sawla* (to-morrow morning), if you's a mind to come."

Preferring to act upon the *carpe diem* principle, I returned with my camera as expeditiously as I could, and though but an hour and a half had elapsed, alas! my birds had flown. Homewards I trudged, a joy-bereft soul for whom the world had suddenly grown empty.

This leads me to remark that the Gypsies are far from easy to photograph. The degree of friendship does not enter into the problem. I have known strangers to pose readily, while old friends have doggedly refused to be "took." Once a friend and I had talked one of the reticent Herons into a willingness to be photographed. Yes, on the morrow he would be "took." But with the morrow his mood had changed. "No, *raia*, not for a thousand pounds."

I remember photographing a Gypsy girl under

curious conditions. Said I, as she sat upon the grass—

“You'll allow me to take a little picture? Your hair is so pretty, and you have a happy face.”

But, no, my words were wasted. Bad luck followed that sort of thing, a cousin of hers had died a fortnight after being “took.”

“But isn't there some charm for keeping off bad luck?”

Looking thoughtful for a moment, she replied—

“Oh yes, if you'll give me a pair of bootlaces, you can *lel mi mui* (take my face) as many times as you *kom*” (like).

I had a pair of laces, *but they were in my boots*. Nothing daunted, however, I went off to a shop in the village half a mile away, and was soon back again presenting the laces to the girl with an Oriental salaam.

Then I got my picture.

Reverting to the Watlands, I was not disappointed. There in a hollow on the moor I found them squatting around their fires. Wearied by travel, some of the elders had retired for the night. “*Dik lesti's pîro*” (look at his foot), said one of the boys, pointing to a man's bare brown foot protruding from beneath a tent cover. Within view of Durham's twinkling lights we sat, and my tobacco pouch having gone the round, we were soon deep in the sayings and doings of the Watlands of other days, for when business is off Gypsies ever talk of Gypsies. As I looked at these



A NORTH-COUNTRY GYPSY GIRL.

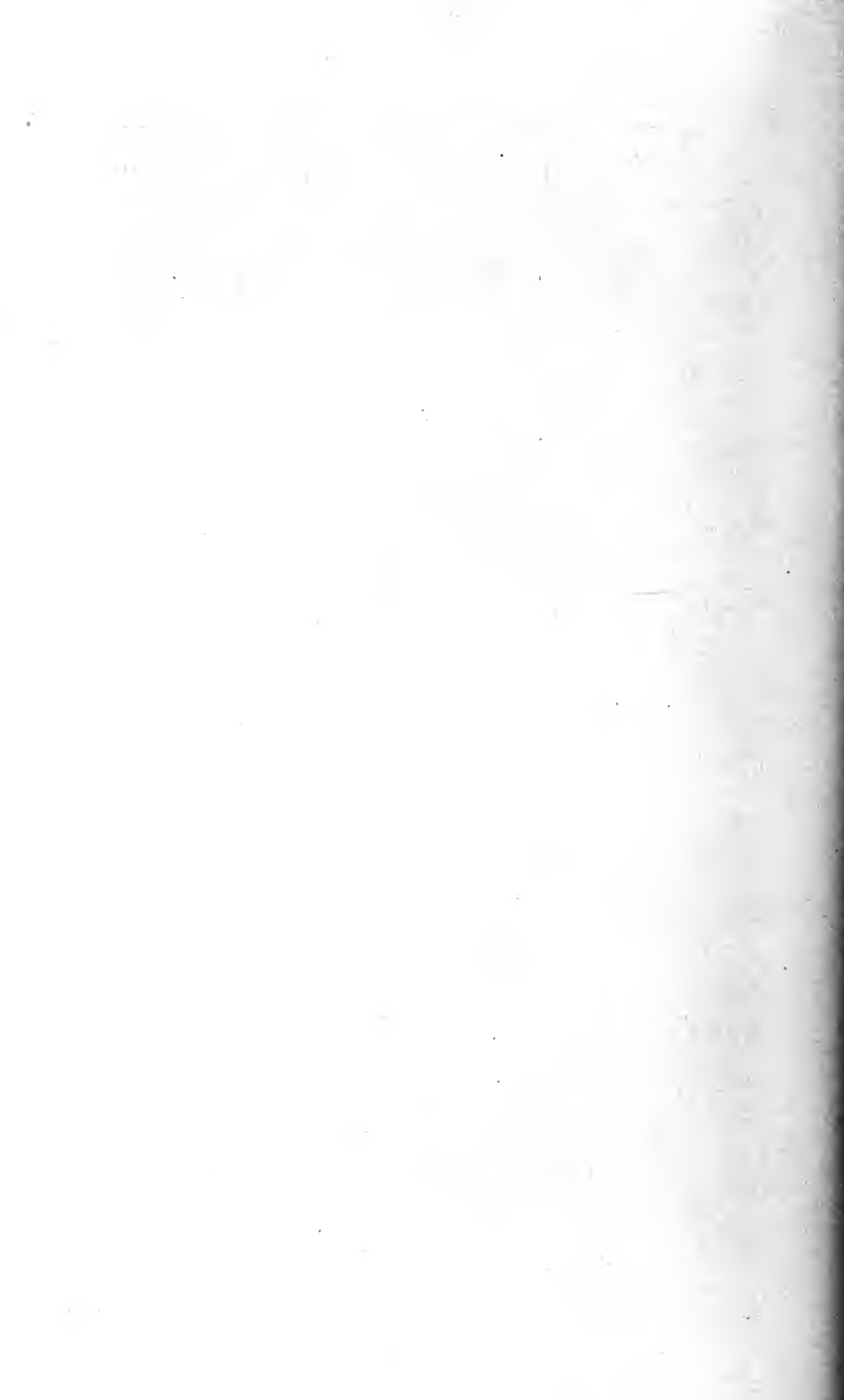
Photo, H. Stimpson.]



ON THE MOORLAND.

Photo, Chas. Reid.]

[To face p. 36.]



folk, it seemed as though behind them through the dusk peered the shades of Romanies of an older, weirder sort, who shunned contact with cities and hated *gawjê* (non-Gypsies) with a bitterness unknown to-day.

Here is a tale of the old times, obtained from grizzled "Durham" Mike Watland, and translated more or less into my own words.

"When I was a little fellow, I used to listen with delight to a blood-curdling story which my grandfather used to tell as we sat watching the red embers die out at night. One time he found himself in a strange predicament, and got such a "gliff" as he had never experienced before. This of course was many years ago, for my grandfather lived to the age of ninety-four, and I am one of the third generation of a long-lived family of Gypsies. The ways of our people were a bit different then. In those days, you saw no harm in taking anything you had a fancy for, if you could get it. My grandfather was a young fellow, and on this particular morning he crossed a moor and came to a hamlet containing three or four straggling houses, and near one of these stood a cowshed and a low barn. In passing the shed he saw hanging there a nice porker which had been killed early that morning, and round it was wrapped a sack to prevent dogs or cats from gnawing it. All this my grandfather observed as he hawked his goods at the cottage door, inwardly resolving to pay Mr. Piggy a visit by night. All was quiet when at a late hour

he re-crossed the moor and arrived at the shed, on entering which he put out his hands and felt for the pig where he had seen it hanging in the morning, but, no, it had been removed. It then occurred to him that for greater safety it might have been carried into the low-roofed barn, so in he went and felt all along the cross-beam. He was right. Sure enough the pig's face struck cold to his hand. Quickly he cut the rope, and, slinging piggy across his shoulder, was soon making his way back to the camping-place. But crossing that rough land with a heavy load was no easy task, and you may be sure that the farther he went the heavier it became. When descending a slope, he caught his foot in a hole, and down he tumbled with his burden. Now as he arose and laid hold of the rope in order to hoist the pig once more, the moon came out from behind a cloud, and revealed the face of—a *dead man*! For a moment he stood mesmerized by fright, then sick at heart he proceeded to acquaint the nearest constable with the fact. The corpse was identified as that of a feeble-minded cottager who had hanged himself in the barn.

One day I was exploring the city of Durham, for my early life in Lincoln had imbued me with a love of old architecture, and the nave of Durham minster profoundly gratified my love of the sombre, when, lo, just over the way, I saw a weather-beaten *vádo* (living-van), and near it was the owner, looking up and down the street as if expecting someone to appear. Cross-

ing the road, I greeted the Gypsy, who turned out to be one of the Winters, a North-Country family to whom has been applied (not without reason) the epithet "wild," and I remembered how Hoyland, in his *Historical Survey of the Gypsies*, had written—

"The distinguished Northern poet, Walter Scott, who is Sheriff of Selkirkshire, has in a very obliging manner communicated the following statement—'. . . some of the most atrocious families have been extirpated. I allude to the Winters, a Northumberland clan, who, I fancy, are all buried by this time.'"

But Sheriff Scott was wrong.

The Winters had only changed their haunts, and on being driven out of the Border Country had moved southward.

As I stood chatting with Mr. Winter, his handsome wife came up with a hawking-basket on her arm. I shall always remember her in connection with a story she told me.

"One day I was sitting on a bank under a garden hedge. It was a hot day and I was very thirsty. I said aloud, 'Oh, for a drink of beer.' Just then a voice came over the hedge, a nice, clear, silvery voice it was, like as if an angel from heaven was a-talking to me—'You shall have one, my dearie.' And in a minute or two a kind lady came down with a big jug of beer. How I did bless that lady for her kindness to a poor Gypsy, and I drank the lot. About a month

afterwards, I heard of the death of that lady, and I vowed to myself and to the *rawni's muli* (lady's spirit) that I would never touch another drop of beer as long as I lived, and I never have done and never will no more."

CHAPTER IV

MY POACHING PUSSY—A ROMANY BENISON— MY FIRST TASTE OF HEDGEHOG

My clerical life has been spent for the most part in green country places, chiefly amid wind-swept hills. Consequently one has learned to delight in the creatures that run and fly, the wild things of wood and wold and brookside, and this love of Nature and her children has never left me; it has companioned with me throughout my wanderings. Give me now an elevated crest commanding a broad sweep of field and forest, with the swift rush of keen air over the furze bushes, a footpath among the thorn-scrub where the finches chatter, the sedgy bank of a moorland stream from which I can hear the "flup" of the trout, or the call of the peewits somersaulting in the sunlight: simple pleasures are these, yet they bring a world of happiness to a man who loves the wilds more than cities, and the windy wold better than the stifling street.

Contrary to the popular notion that Lincolnshire is no more than a dreary expanse of black fenland soil intersected by drains of geometric straightness, I may point out that there are two well-defined hill

ranges extending almost throughout the county—the chalk and greensand Wolds, and the limestone “Heights,” running parallel after the manner of the *duplex spina* of Virgil’s well-bred horse.

On the western edge of the Wolds, overlooking a richly varied landscape, nestles the hamlet where I made my first home after marriage, and the country lying around our hilltop parsonage was an ideal hunting-ground for a naturalist. Borne on the rude March gales the wild pipe of the curlew greeted the ear as you met the buffeting gusts along the unfrequented ridgeways, and over winter snows an observant eye might trace the badger’s spoor. On summer evenings when the far-away minster of Lincoln was a purple cameo upon an amber ground, and the shadows creeping out of the woods began to spread over the hills, a brown owl would sail by on noiseless wings, or Reynard might be seen trotting across the sheep-nibbled sward towards the warren below the clustering firs.

Rambling along the wold one gleaming autumn afternoon, my attention was attracted by the rapid movements of some diminutive, fluffy-looking creature, which to a casual saunterer might have been a wren or a hedgesparrow; but after having stood quietly for a moment or two, a dark velvety ball of fur darted towards me, and in a most confiding manner ran over my boots, and sniffed at the stout ash-plant which I invariably carry with me along the lanes. For some time I stood watching the unconscious

play of this tiny mouse. At last, however, I made a move and my wee friend fled like a thought to his retreat in the hedge.

On another occasion, I was seated in my old oak stall in the village church. It was a harvest festival, and a college friend was in the midst of his sermon, when I distinctly felt something nibbling at the hem of my cassock. It was a plump grey mouse, and on moving my foot I saw him speed down the aisle like an arrow. As fortune had it, the ladies in the front pew, being properly rapt in the eloquent discourse, escaped the disquieting vision of my church mousie.

These mice incidents, with a few more like them, were strung together and dispatched to the *Pall Mall Budget*, edited at that time by Mr. Charles Morley. My literary effort was duly printed, with pleasing sketches from the pencil of that peerless lover of pussies, Mr. Louis Wain, the then president of the Cat Club.

It was in the same parish that I had a favourite pussy, "Tony" by name, who would daily follow me to church, and wait at the vestry door for my reappearance after matin-prayers. But, alas, he acquired the poaching habit, a sure path to destruction, as I learned one day to my sorrow in passing the keeper's gibbet at the end of a woodland glade.

One of my rambles with this pussy I recall quite vividly. One afternoon I set off across the wold intending to make pastoral visits upon a few outlying

cottagers. I had got about half a mile from home, and, looking round, there was Tony just at my heels. I strolled along, and presently heard a squealing, and out of a clump of nettles came my cat dragging a plump rabbit. It was dead, and the cat, panting after his effort, looked up at me, as much as to say, "You're not going to leave it here, are you?" Whereupon I remembered the saying of an old Gypsy, "If you had a dog that brought a hare or a rabbit to your feet, wouldn't it be flying in the face of providence to refuse to take it?" So, picking up the rabbit, I put it in one of the roomy pockets of my long-tailed coat, and went on. The cat persisted in following. By and by, we drew near to a disused quarry, where the cat captured a second rabbit, which went into the other pocket of my long coat. By this time I began to feel the charm of the sport of that gentleman who sallies forth on "a shiny night at the season of the year." The pastoral visits had now perforce to be abandoned, but on turning my face homeward, oh, horrors! there, not a hundred yards away, was a man on horseback, accompanied by a dog, and, seeing them, my cat scooted along a gulley up the hill, and was gone. I could not disappear quite so easily. However, as I did not altogether fancy a strange dog sniffing at my coat-tails, I made a detour, and the horseman passed a good way below me on the slope. You should have seen my wife smile as I plumped two nice bunnies on the kitchen table. We observed that those rabbits

tasted quite as good as any you purchase at a game-dealer's stall in the market.

Gypsies, as all the world knows, are fond of the hedgehog.

They do not keep him as a pet. They eat him, and roast hedgehog accompanied with sage and onions is a dish for an episcopal table. I never see one of these prickly fellows without being reminded of several experiences.

Once in passing along a town street on my way to the Archdeacon's Visitation, I noticed not far ahead of me an elderly woman stepping out with a swinging stride. Her face I could not see, but she wore a tattered shawl about her shoulders, and her black hair was done up in small plaits like a horse's mane at fair-time. "Gypsy," said I to myself, and, hastening alongside, I greeted her in the Romany tongue. The words had a magical effect. Instantly she wheeled round and scanned me up and down with a puzzled air. There before her, wearing an orthodox collar and black coat, stood a parson who nevertheless talked like a Gypsy. Now in common with some ladies of high degree, nearly all Gypsy women enjoy a whiff of tobacco smoke. This old lady, however, declined a gift of the weed on the ground that "the brantitus" had troubled her of late, but she gladly stepped with me into a snug coffee-house close by, where over our steaming cups we conversed aloud in the Gypsy language, to the complete

mystification of the prim-looking manageress whose curiosity kept her hovering near. What that good woman's thoughts were, I have not the faintest idea. I only know that she seemed amazed at the sight of a Gypsy in easy intercourse with a simple-looking cleric who appeared to be enjoying himself. Both, too, were speaking a queer-sounding language understandable to each other, but utterly incomprehensible to the listener. What could it all mean? Well, Gypsies at anyrate are not without a sense of humour; indeed, no one enjoys a bit of fun more than they. Taking in the situation at a glance, my Gypsy companion gave me a sly look, and, waving her hand playfully, exclaimed, "Never mind him, missis, he's nobbut an Irishman, and can't a boy and his mither talk a word or two in their own language?"

On my taking leave of the Gypsy mother, she bestowed this benison upon me: "The Lord love you, my son, and *may you always have a big hedgehog in your mouth.*"

Hedgehog, as I have said, is a dainty dish with Gypsies, and the old woman was no more than kindly wishing that there might ever be a titbit ready to slip into my mouth.

I am not likely to forget the occasion of my first actual taste of this Romany delicacy.

Charley Watland (brother of "Durham" Mike), a wide traveller, had told me much of the delights of a certain old-fashioned Midland horse-fair, con-

cluding one of his glowing descriptions by inviting me to meet him in mid-September at this fair. Thus it came to pass that I set out one fine morning with my face towards the distant hills of Leicestershire. Of the day-long journey, I am now concerned only with its closing scenes. Pushing up a long, tiring hill, I spied over a hedge in the dusk two or three *vâdê* (living-vans), some low tents with flickering fires before them, and dark figures moving to and fro. With what energy I had left, I climbed over a fence and made straight for the Gypsy fires. A tall *Romanitshel*, leaning against a tree-bole, was singing snatches of a song in which I caught the words *Beng* (Devil) and *puri-dai* (grandmother), but, on seeing a stranger approach, he ceased. The Romany greeting, which I flung on the evening air, caused a stoutish woman to thrust her head from the doorway of the nearest caravan.

"He's one o' the Lees, I'll be bound. He talks like 'em. He's come back from over the *pâni*" (water). Which, being interpreted, meant that I was a "lag's" boy returned from over-sea. The idea tickled me so that I laughed outright.

Beside the fire which was burning brightly at the feet of the tall Gypsy man, children and dogs were rolling over one another in perfect happiness, and at my elbow a lad, peering into my face, exclaimed—

"I'll swop *diklos* (kerchiefs) with you, *rai*."

"No, you won't," I replied; "mine's silk and yours cotton."

"*Pen mandi, baw*" (Tell me, friend), I inquired of the tall man under the trees, "Is Charley Watland here this time?"

"*Keka, mi pal*, the *puro's* *poger'd* his *hëro* (No, my brother, the old man's broken his leg) at Peterborough. He's got kicked by a hoss, and he's in the infirmary." This was bad news, for I had hoped to meet my friend here and spend the night with him.

A little way across the fields the lights of a village gleamed through the darkness, and, making my way thither, I sought for a resting-place, but in vain. Every available bed was already engaged. In and out of the taverns passed horse-dealers and rollicking Gypsies. Groups of Romany lads and lasses stood talking in the lane. Burly women with foaming jugs bumped against you in the shadows. Between the barking of dogs and the whinnying of horses, a word or two of Romany floated now and then to one's ear.

Tired after my day in the open air, I turned into a by-lane to think matters over. A gentle wind rustled the leaves on the trees, and on the eastern horizon a growing light told of approaching moon-rise. I sat on a fence and watched Old Silver appear above the hills. Away from the village, I began to notice the sights and sounds of night. An owl on velvety wing fluttered by. Little birds cheeped in the thicket behind me. Field-mice squeaked in the grass on the bank. I



ROUND THE CAMP-FIRE.

Photo, F. R. Hinkins.]



A CHILD OF THE CARAVAN.

Photo, Fred Sharv.]

[To face p. 48.]



began to feel cut off from the world. What was I to do? Walk about all night? Make a bed on the bracken in a neighbouring wood? Renew my search for a more civilized couch in one or other of the adjacent villages? Tramp down the long dusty road to a small town some few miles off, where I knew of more than one snug hostelry? Why indeed? Was I not out for adventure? I resolved to ask the Gypsies to give me a bed. Therefore, without further ado, I slipped through a gap in the hedge, and made tracks for the Gypsy fires already mentioned.

"Hello, here's the *rai* back again." It was the tall Gypsy's wife who spoke. My tale was soon told, and I was promptly offered a corner under Arthur West's tilt-hood placed tent-wise on the ground. Now that my mind was at ease, I sat me down by the fire near which a savoury smell of supper arose. It was astonishing how quickly we cleaned the bones of several bird-like objects set before us.

"Did you ever taste of these little things afore?"

"Well, whatever they are, I shouldn't mind if they had been larger."

At this they all laughed aloud.

"*Dawdi*, the *rai* doesn't *jin* he's *haw'd hotshwitshi*" (Fancy, the gentleman doesn't know he's eaten hedgehog).

So this was the much-vaunted Romany dish,

nor did it disappoint me. The blended flavours of pheasant and sucking-pig are still present to my memory as I recall that moonlit meal washed down by a jug of brown ale.

On awaking next morning, I realized the truth of the saying, "Gypsies get something straight from heaven which is never known to people who sleep in stuffy houses and get up to wash in warm water."

When I recall awakenings in lodgings with the bedclothes, valances, curtains, falderals, anti-macassars, all heavy with suggestions of humanity, I marvel no more at the Gypsy's choice of a bed of crisp bracken or sweet straw, with maybe a wisp of dried river-mint or wild thyme mingled with it.

Walking bare-foot in the dewy grass with the Gypsy children, we made our toilet together in the open, with the light airs of the wold playing about us. Then came breakfast by the wood fire, and during the meal my host's donkey affectionately put his cold nose on the bare of my neck. In a little while we stood on the common where the fair was in full swing, and, strolling among the horses and dealers, I spied a curly-haired son of old Horace Boswell, just arrived from Leicester, who found time to tell me a funny tale about his father.

Since early morn Horace had been riding a lively horse, and, dismounting, handed the reins to

a pal and walked a few yards into the fair. As he was looking about him, he lighted upon George Smith of Coalville, who, arching his bushy eyebrows and stroking his great beard, stood shocked at the sight of a Gypsy walking unsteadily. As a matter of fact, Horace's legs had not yet thrown off the cramp of many hours' riding on a skittish animal. When solemn George opened his mouth it was to ask a question—

“Do you drink beer, my good man?”

“Well, my kind gentleman,” replied Horace, “afore I answers that question, I'd reely like to know whether it's a simple inquiry or an invitation.”

This was too much for the worthy philanthropist who, turning swiftly on his heel, went his way swinging his Gladstone-bag and gingham.

About the middle of the afternoon I sought out my hospitable friend Arthur West before quitting the fair, and, looking me straight in the eyes, he said, “Are you quite sure that you have enough *lova* (money) to see you home? For if I thought you hadn't, I should chuck a handful on the *drom* (road) and leave it for you to pick up.”

How shall we ever get you to understand the spirit of these wanderers; you who coddle yourselves in hot, close rooms; who are wedded to the life of a mill-horse jogging in convention's dusty track, and whose souls are imprisoned within the dimensions of a red-ochred flower-pot?

CHAPTER V

A GYPSY BAPTISM—ROMANY NAMES

QUITTING the Wolds, described in the preceding chapter, I took up my abode in a large village situated on Lincoln Heath, where I had further opportunities of pursuing my Gypsy studies round about home.

In a sinuous turfy lane which ran behind our house, the Gypsies would pitch their camp from time to time, and one of these wandering families conceived the notion of renting a cottage in the village. In my mind's eye I can see that little house, wearing a lost, desolate air. It stood in a walled-in yard, where loose stones lay strewn, and the ridge of the red-tiled roof sunken in the middle threatened a collapse.

Unaccustomed to sleeping under a roof, and a rickety one at that, the Gypsies fled in alarm from their chamber one wild, boisterous night, fearing lest the chimney-pots should tumble in upon them. Near by stood their green caravan, and snugly abed therein they felt secure from all harm. Next day a timid rap came at the Rectory door, and a black-eyed girl whispered in my ear that her mother

would like the baby, a few hours old, to be christened. This I did, and a day or two afterwards I was agreeably surprised to meet the Gypsy mother with her baby taking the fresh air on the high road. What mother in any other rank of life could carry her child in the open so soon after its birth?

"It's a way we have," said Walter Heron, when explaining to me that a plate, cup, and saucer are set apart for the mother's use during the four weeks following the birth of a child. The vessels are then destroyed in accordance with an old puerperal tabu. This custom is still observed in all good Romany families.

Tom Lee, an English Gypsy, broke up a loaf of bread and strewed the crumbs around his tent when his son Bendigo was born, for some of the old-time Gypsies hold the notion that bread possesses a protective magic against evil influences. Seated one day in the tent of Bendigo Lee on the South Shore at Blackpool, I questioned him about his father's practice. "In the days when I was born," he replied, "there were people that could do hurt by looking at you, and I s'pose my *dadus* (father) sprinkled the crumbs lest any evil person going by should cast harm upon me."

A distinct survival of the belief in the evil eye.

Romany "fore," or Christian names,¹ are often peculiar, and afford much material for reflection.

¹ See list of masculine and feminine names, pp. 299-302.

Whence come such names as Khulai, Maireni, Malini, Mori, Shuri? In these names Sir Richard Temple discerns Indian forms or terminations. The Anglo-Romany names, Fenela, Siari, and Trenit, have been identified by Mr. H. T. Crofton with the Continental forms, Vennel, Cihari, and Tranitzza, the last being a common feminine Gypsy name in Hungary.

Euphonious and out-of-the-way names are irresistible to the Gypsy.

"What metal is that box made of, sir?" asked a Gypsy mother on seeing a gentleman's cigarette-case.

"Aluminium," was the reply.

"What a beautiful name for my gell's baby!"

According to Charles G. Leland, a Gypsy father, hearing two gentlemen talking about Mount Vesuvius, was greatly impressed by the name, and consulted with them as to the propriety of giving it to his little boy.

Gypsies dislike to be addressed by their peculiar "fore" or Christian names in the presence of *gawjé*; hence to the postman, Ênos become Amos, Fèmi—Amy, and Poley—George, and so on. As a rule, you find a Gypsy is unwilling to impart his true name to a stranger. May not this reluctance be due to a lingering subconscious belief that the possession of one's true name would enable a stranger to work harmful spells upon the owner?

Time was when the belief was widely spread

that the utterance of a man's true name drew him to the speaker. Medieval records are full of legendary accounts of spirits who were summoned by the casual pronunciation of their names. Until lately there were peasants in the North of Ireland and Arran who absolutely refused to tell their names to a stranger because such knowledge, it was believed, would enable him to "call" them, no matter how far he was from them, and whenever he cared to do so. They also believed that any spell worked on the written name would have the same effect as if worked on the owner.

It is a fact that not a few Gypsy surnames are identical with those of ancient noble families, *e.g.* Boswell, or Bosville (sometimes contracted to Boss), Gray, Heron, Hearne, or Herne, Lees, Lovells, and Stanleys. It has been surmised, by way of explanation, that the Gypsies soon after their arrival in this country adopted the surnames of the owners of the estates on which particular hordes usually encamped, or the names of those landed families who afforded protection to the persecuted wanderers.

Speaking of the Gypsies, Gilbert White of Selborne, says, "One of these tribes calls itself by the noble name of Stanley." This mention of the Stanleys reminds me that once on Gonerby Hill, near Grantham, on the Great North Road, I met a young man who looked like a mechanic out of work, yet his bearing was that of a Gypsy. In our talk he admitted that he was of Romany blood. He had

been a horseman in Lord George Sanger's circus, but something had gone wrong and he was thrown out of employ. At first he gave his name as Richardson (not a Gypsy name), but he afterwards told me that his grandfather, a Stanley, had been transported, for which reason the family assumed the name of Richardson.

CHAPTER VI

I MAKE A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

FOR several years I was curate-in-charge of a parish abutting upon the Great North Road, and during that time I used to meet many Gypsies on the famous highway. There passed along it members of the Boswell clan, making their way from Edinburgh to London; the dark Herons, after spending the summer months in the Northern Counties, came by this route to their winter quarters at Nottingham; a lawless horde of Lovells also knew this road well. Sometimes these Gypsies would turn aside from the dusty highway for a brief rest in the green lanes across an adjacent river, but they rarely tarried longer than a day. With one of these Gypsies I became intimately acquainted, and this is how our friendship began.

One May morning I had been strolling along the aforesaid road, and, turning towards the river where it is spanned by an old mill-bridge, I loitered there in expectation of the arrival of a pack of otter-hounds, visitors from another county; for complaints had long been accumulating to the effect that *Lutra* had been making depredations among the fish, game, and poultry all along the reaches of the river. Adjoining

the bridge was a watermill where often might be heard the humming of the great wheel and the roar of foam-flecked water. Mellowed by time's gentle touch, the irregular outlines of the building seemed verily as if arranged to be imaged on canvas; timbers and weathered stones were everywhere mottled with rosettes of orange and grey lichen, and when the sunbeams warmed the tints and tones of the old mill into rich masses of colour you experienced a thrill which made you wish to repeat it.

A little way off, our river was crossed by a shallow ford rarely used by vehicular traffic, which mostly passed by the bridge. Once a year, however, the miller closed the bridge in order to preserve a right-of-way through his yard, and on this occasion toll was taken of every cart, while a free way was allowed by the ford. But the astute fellow usually arranged that the closing of the bridge should coincide with a market day at the nearest town, and he would choose a time when the river was swollen by flood-water beyond its ordinary dimensions, thus rendering the ford a dangerous crossing.

After waiting awhile, a murmur of deep voices broke upon my ear, as with a rush and a splash about a score of bonny, rough-coated dogs burst into view round a bend in the stream. It was not in my plans to follow the dogs, so when the pack and its excited companions had gone by, I proceeded leisurely along a lane leading towards the green uplands looking down upon the valley.

A little way up the lane I came upon two dark-featured lads, and, going up to one of them who was tacking strips of straw-plait upon the top of a three-legged table, I said—

“You seem very busy this morning.”

“We must do something for a living.”

“You’re certainly a good hand at your business. How long are you stopping here?”

“That’s more nor I know.” (This with a shrewd look at me from top to toe.) “Ax grandfather, up yonder wi’ the hosses.”

Higher up the lane, and almost hidden by out-lying tangles of bramble and wild-rose, sat a man of sixty or more, puffing tobacco smoke from his black clay, and near him on the wayside three horses ripped the tender grasses.

Looking up at me with a start, the man said—

“Well, you fairly took me by surprise, sir. For a wonder I never heard you a-coming. I must be getting deaf.”

“*Romanitshel?*” (Gypsy) I queried.

“*Âvali, mi tshavo*” (Yes, my son), he replied; “you’s been among our people, that’s plain, or you wouldn’t talk like you do. Mebbe you’s heard tell o’ Jonathan Boswell—that’s me. But I must be off now with these here hosses to the smithy. We’s *beskin akai* (stopping here) for a day or two. Our wagon’s in the *kitshima* (tavern) yard just past the mill.”

“Well, Jonathan, I want you to bring one of

those Gypsy-tables the boys are making to my place this afternoon ; don't fail to come. I shall *dik avri* for *tíro mui* about *trin ora*" (look out for your face about three o'clock).

"Right, I'll be there, *raia*."

In due course the Gypsy presented himself at my door in company with his two grandsons, and among them they carried three tables. I had only asked for one, but Jonathan was such a "find" that I gladly purchased all the articles and bade the little party follow me into the garden. The two grandsons displayed a remarkable knowledge of trees, which they were able to identify not merely by their foliage, but by the character of their bark. Wild birds they knew by note and flight as well as by plumage. There is so much a Gypsy boy knows about nature.

How meagre, by contrast, is the information possessed by the average County Council schoolboy ; which reminds me that I was once giving an object-lesson to a class of fifth-standard children attending our village school. We were seated on a river bank whose insect life and botanical treasures I had been pointing out to an interested group of listeners. As nothing had been said about the scaly denizens of the stream, I concluded my talk by putting a question to the entire class.

"Hands up, those who can tell me the names of any fish to be found in this river."

Quickly a dozen pink palms were uplifted, and I could see that several lips were bursting with in-

formation. Imagine my surprise when I was informed —“red-herring, sprats, and mackerel.”

On the following evening I went across the fields to see my friends by the watermill. The amber light of sunset was falling upon green hedge and rippling river. From a thorn bush a nightingale jug-jugged deliciously. There was poetry in the air. Nor was it dispelled by the discovery that my friends had drawn their “house on wheels” into the grassy lane leading down to the ford.

Seated on a mound of sand, Jonathan was chatting with a stranger who had the looks of an Irishman. I joined them, but no sooner had I dropped a word or two of Romany than the stranger arose, saying, “I don’t understand your talk, so I’d better be going.” He then left us, and, seeing he had gone away, old Fazenti, Jonathan’s wife, stepped down from the living-wagon, and our discourse became considerably enlivened by her presence.

Speaking of *dukerin* (fortune-telling), she said, “It’ll go on while the world lasts,” which was Fazy’s way of saying that the credulous will be in the world after the poor have left it. “It’s the hawking-basket that gi’s us our chance, don’t you *dik* (see)? I takes care never to be without my licence, and the *muskero* (policeman) would have to get up wery early to catch old Fazy asleep. Did I ever have any *mulo-mas*?¹

¹ *Mulo-mas*, the flesh of an animal which has died without the aid of a butcher. “Isn’t what the *diri Duvel* (God) kills as good as anything killed by a *masengro*?” (butcher).

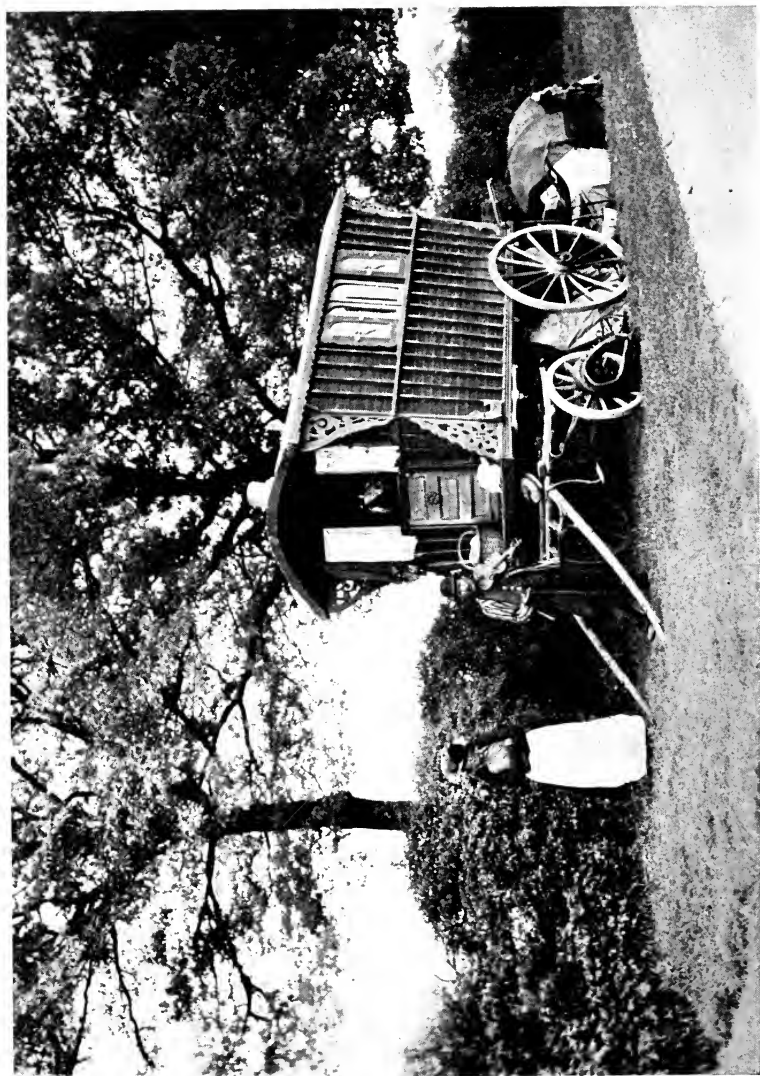
Many's the time I've had a bit. In spring, when lambs are about, that's the time for *mulo-mas*.

"A good country for hedgehogs is this, but we don't eat 'em in the spring. The back end of the year is the best time for 'em; there's a bit of flesh on 'em then. When you find one, if he's rolled up in a ball, you rub his back with a stick right down his spine, and he'll open out fast enough. Then you hit him hard on the nose, and he's as dead as a door nail. The old way of cooking him was to cover him with clay and bake him in the fire. When he was cooked you tapped the clay ball, and the prickles and skin came away with the clay. Nowadays we burn down the bristles, then shave 'em off, draw and clean him and roast him on a spit before a hot fire. He's wery good with *puvengris* (potatoes), sage, and onions. *Bouris* (snails) are good to eat in winter. You get them in a hard frost from behind old stumps of trees. You put salt on 'em and they make fine broth. Wery strengthening is *bouri-zimen*" (snail broth).

While we were conversing, Jonathan's grandsons passed by with a lurcher.

"A useful dog, that, I should think," said I.

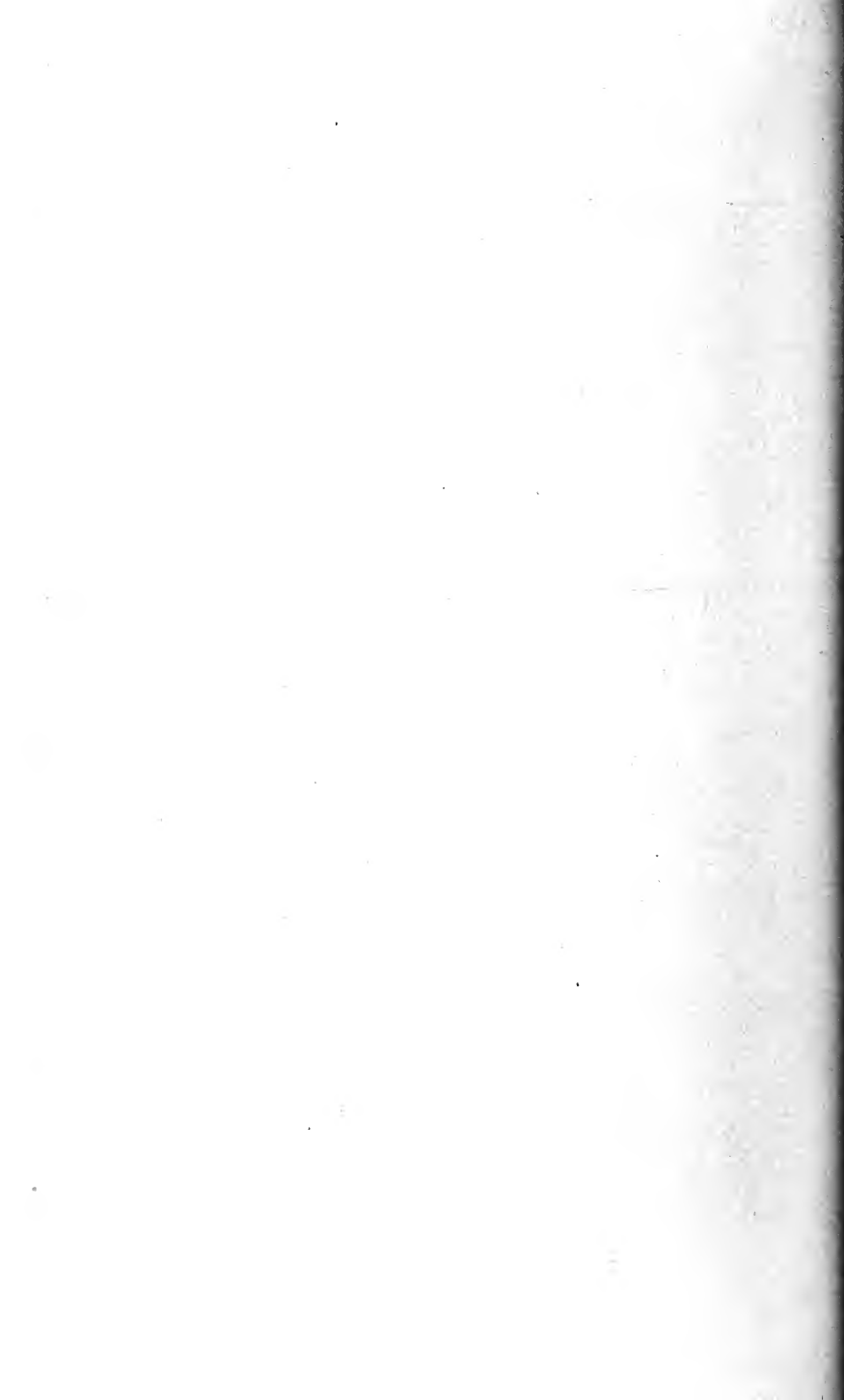
"*Kushto yek sî dova* for *shushiaw* and *kanengrê*" (A good one is that for rabbits and hares), replied the old man. "I minds well the day I bought him off a man with a pot-cart as was stopping along with us. We'd got leave from a farmer to draw into a lane running between some clover fields, and we were



A REST BY THE WAY.

Photo, Fred Shaw.

[To face p. 62.]



just sitting down to a cup o' tea when a keeper comes along and says—

“ ‘I'm afraid some of you fellows have been up to mischief, because there's a hare in a snare along this hedge.’

“ ‘Then it's somebody else's snare, not ours,’ I says, ‘for we's only just got here, and yon farmer as give us leave to stop will tell you the same if you ask him.’

“ ‘Well, see here,’ says the keeper, ‘there's a rabbit for your pot. Keep a sharp look out, and mind you let me know if anybody comes to fetch that hare. There's my cottage up yonder.’

“ Then he went away, and would you believe it, a bit after the moon got up we see a man coming across the field and straight to that snare he went, and as he was taking the hare out of it, there was a tap on his shoulder from the keeper. Now, who do you think the man was that got caught so nicely? *It was the willage policeman.* And that night I bought that here *jukel* (dog), I did, and me and the dog had a fine time among the *shushiaw* (rabbits) after the keeper and the policeman had gone away. About a week after, the *musker* (policeman) had to appear in court, and a wery poor figure he cut afore the *pukinger* (magistrate). You see, he was caught proper, and couldn't get out of it no-how. The pot-cart man and me had to go up as witnesses.”

“ You'll know this countryside well, I expect.

Do you ever spend the night in Dark Lane, as I believe they call it?"

"One time we used to stop there a lot, *rai*, but they won't let us now. How'smiver, we *hatsh odoi* (encamp there) for a *râti* (night) at odd times, spite of everybody."

This remark was accompanied by a half-smothered chuckle from Jonathan, who, while filling his pipe from my tobacco pouch, seemed to be ruminating upon a reminiscence which presently came out.

The said lane lies pleasantly between a neighbouring village and the river, and about the month of May the grass down there begins to be sweet, but woe to the Gypsies whom the constable finds encamped thereabouts.

Jonathan went on to tell how he and his party once passed a night very happily there when the may-buds were bursting. And this is how it was done.

In a wayside tavern the Gypsy had heard it whispered that the County Police had gone to the town for the annual inspection, which involved a temporary absence of the constables from their respective localities. But, to make quite sure of this, on arriving at the village of F——, Jonathan sought out a certain cottage and thus addressed himself to a constable's wife—

"Is the sergeant at home?"

"No, my man. What do you want him for?"

"A pony of mine has gone astray, and I want

him to let me know if he hears anything about it. Perhaps he'll be at home to-night?"

"He won't, I'm afraid."

"Thank you, ma'am."

Thus Jonathan camped down Dark Lane with impunity.

One morning shortly after my meeting with Jonathan, a Gypsy mother called at my Rectory. She led her black-eyed, five-year-old boy by the hand. Brown as a berry, the handsome little fellow would have served admirably for an artist's model, and his mother had many pleasing touches of Gypsy colour about her attire. From beneath a bright red *diklo* (kerchief) which she wore, a few black curls straggled out on to her forehead, and a gay bodice showed under her green shawl. The woman said that she had heard so much of me from her father—Jonathan Boswell—that she had come on purpose to see me. I invited her into the kitchen, and over bread and cheese and ale we chatted.

"Ain't we all delated, *raia*, come to think of it? There's a Man above as made us all."

Quickly I made friends with the little boy, and at my request his mother afforded our household no small delight by leaving her son with us for the day. The tiny lad was entirely unaccustomed to house ways, and his behaviour was a study. On seeing a Christmas card with the Christ-child lying in the manger guarded by a white-winged angel, he ex-

claimed, "I know what that is" (pointing to the heavenly visitant); "we often sees 'em flying over the fields. *It's a seagull.*"

With great readiness he joined in the games of my children, such as shuttlecock and battledore, skipping, and the like. Sitting at a table for a meal was evidently a novel experience for the little chap, and it was amusing to see him slip off his chair and squat on the hearthrug, putting his plate on his knee as though a Gypsy boy ought not to do exactly as the *gawjê*, and he used his fingers freely in lieu of fork and spoon. After the meal we sat round the fire, and talked of his life on the road.

"I found a hen's nest in the hedge-bottom, this morning, I did."

"Any eggs in?" I asked.

"Yes; three."

"Did you take them?"

"No, I left 'em—*till there was more.*"

Then I told him fairy tales of green woods, ghosts, and goblins, and he became excited, springing once or twice from his chair, as if he would like to have danced about the room.

"Oh, I knows a lot about *mulos*" (ghosts), said the little Gypsy. "There's different sorts—milk-white 'uns and coal-black 'uns. When we're abed at nights, they come screaming round our wagon and flapping at the windows. My daddy gets his gun and shoots, then we hears 'em no more for a bit. But they are soon back agen, and I'm that frit

when I hears 'em, I can't sleep. When mammy's going out with her basket of a morning, and daddy's gone somewhere to see about a hoss, I daren't go far into the big wood agen our stopping-place, 'cos of the black pig what lives there. Daddy has seen it, and nobody can't kill it, for you can bang a stick right through it without hurting it. Mammy allus says, 'Don't you never go into that wood, else the black pig'll get you.' "

We showed him picture books, and, pointing to an ass and a foal, he said, "My daddy's got a little donkey just like that, three months old, and when it's bigger I shall ride on it, like that man's doing in the pictur'."

We rambled in the Rectory garden, and he quickly found a hedgehog in its nest. All the senses of this little fellow were extremely alert.

In the early evening his mother returned for him, and their meeting was a pretty sight. Placing her hawking-basket on the ground, she picked up her laddie in her arms and kissed him. Slowly the pair walked away, casting more than one backward glance at the house.

A few days later, news reached me of a Gypsy arrival in a green lane about a mile from my Rectory. I therefore hastened across the fields, and, long before sighting the party, whiffs of wood-smoke, which the breeze brought my way, told that they were already encamped. On reaching the spot, Farmer W——'s best bullock pasture, I spied

Jonathan's cart along with other vehicles drawn up with their backs towards a high hedge. There were fires on the grass, and from family groups merry voices rang out on the air. In the lane a troop of children were hovering around a little black donkey, a pretty young foal, which allowed them to fondle it to their hearts' content. What a picture it was which greeted me—tree-boles, tilt-carts, and hedgerows lit up by the fading sunlight, and the blue smoke of the fires wafted about the undulating field dipping down to the river. Quickly I dropped into a corner by one of the fires, and the mirth was just at its height when up rode Farmer W—— on his chestnut cob.

"Where's that scamp of a Boswell?" he shouted angrily.

Jonathan stepped forward, hanging his head somewhat.

"What does all this mean?" asked the farmer. "I thought it was only for yourself that you begged leave to stop here. Who the devil's all this gang?"

"I really couldn't help it," said Jonathan. "They stuck to me, and would come in. They're all delations of mine, don't you see, sir?"

A look from the Gypsy made me step forward and plead for the party, which I did with success.

About the middle of June I was again in Old Boswell's company. Under a hedge pink with wild-roses, we sat smoking and waiting for the fair to begin on Stow Green, a South Lincolnshire common.



A WAYSIDE IDYL.

Photo, Fred Shaw.



CHILDREN OF THE OPEN AIR.

Photo, Fred Shaw.

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Already horses were assembling and dealers were beginning to arrive in all sorts of conveyances. Hot sunshine blazed down upon the common, whose only building was a wretched-looking lock-up, around which lounged several representatives of the county constabulary. Wandering in and about the motley throng, I caught a whisper going the round that a fight was to take place before the end of the day. It had been explained to me that this fight was not the result of any quarrel arising at the fair. It had been arranged long beforehand. Whenever a difference arose between two families, champions were told off to fight the matter out at Stow Green Fair.

Somewhere about the middle of the afternoon, as the business began to slacken, a number of people were seen to move to one corner of the common. Evidently something was afoot. I wandered across and found a crowd consisting mainly of Gypsies, and in order to get a better view, I climbed upon a trestle table outside a booth. In the middle of a ring of people stood two of the dark Grays, stripped to the waist, and, at a signal given by an elderly man, the combatants put up their "maulers" and the fight began. It was by no means a one-sided contest, the men being well matched with regard to weight and strength. Blow followed blow in quick succession, and at the first drawing of blood the Gypsy onlookers became excited, and the entire crowd began to surge to and fro. Of course, the

police hurried up, but soon perceived that it was useless to interfere.

"Let 'em have it out," cried many voices. After a breathing space, the fighters again closed in, and, parting a little, one of them stepped back a pace or two and, springing towards his opponent, dealt him a heavy blow which determined the battle, and all was over. At this juncture, the table on which I and others stood suddenly gave way, and we were precipitated to the grass, but no harm was done, beyond a few bruises and the shattering of sundry jugs and glasses.

An echo of a fighting song haunts me as I recall this Gypsy contest on Stow Green—

"Whack it on the grinders, thump it on the jaw,
Smack it on the tater-trap a dozen times or more.
Slap it on the snuff-box, make the claret fly,
Thump it on the jaw again, never say die."

After the fair was over I sat under a hedge and took tea with Jonathan and Fazenti.

A hare's back adorned my plate.

"Why, mother, I didn't know that this was in season."

"My *dinelo* (simpleton), don't you *jin* (know) *it's always in season with the likes of us?*"

CHAPTER VII

THE BLACKPOOL GYPSYRY

It has been said that if an architect, a caterer, and a poet were commissioned to construct out of our existing south and east coast resorts a place which, in its appeal to the million, might compare with Blackpool, they would utterly fail, a saying not to be questioned for a moment.

Yet the sight which thrilled me most, as I beheld it years ago, was not the cluster of gilded pleasure-palaces in the town, but the gay Gypsyry squatting on the sand-dunes at the extremity of the South Shore. Living-vans of green and gold with their flapping canvas covers; domed tents whose blankets of red and grey had faded at the touch of sun and wind; boarden porches and outgrowths of a fantastic character, the work of Romany carpenters; unabashed advertisements announcing Gypsy queens patronized by duchesses and lords; bevvies of black-eyed, wheedling witches eager to pounce upon the stroller into Gypsydom; and troops of fine children, shock-headed and jolly—all these I beheld in the Gypsyry which is now no more. “Life enjoyed to the last” might well have been its epitaph.

Those were the days of Old Sarah Boswell and her nephews Kenza and Oscar ; Johnny and Wasti Gray ; Elijah Heron and his son Poley ; Bendigo and Morjiana Purum ; the vivacious Robinsons ; Dolferus Petulengro and Noarus Tâno ; some of whom, alas, "have joined the people whom no true Romany will call by name."

Hot June sunshine flooded the sandhills on the afternoon of my entry into the encampment, which, by the way, was made strategically from the rear. Thus it was that I lighted upon the retired tent of the oldest occupants of the Gypsyry. Unlike the alert and expectant Romany mothers and maids who hovered about this Gypsy town's front gate, Ned Boswell's widow sat drowsing at the tent door, overpowered by the midsummer heat. I was about to turn away, intending to revisit the old lady later on, when her son Alma, the lynx-eyed, popped upon me from round the corner, and in a sandy hollow a little way off we were soon deep in conversation.

"Now, *rashai*," said Alma, after we had talked awhile, "there's one thing I would like to ask you. Where do you think us *Romanitshels* reely origin'd from?"

Here I was confronted by a question which has been asked throughout the ages, and addressed to myself how many times?

Who are the Gypsies, and where did they come from? Bulky tomes have been filled with scholarly speculations upon these questions, and so varied have



PHOTO T. J. LEWIS.

ON THE LOOK-OUT.

been the conclusions arrived at that we appear to be no nearer to the solution of the mystery than when about the year 1777 the German Rudiger first made known to the world that the Gypsies spoke an Indian dialect, which discovery is said "to have injured more than it served in the quest after the origin of the Gypsies, because it has prevented scholars from searching for it." Taking philology for our guide, we may believe that the ancestors of our Gypsies tarried for centuries in North-West India, a region which they quitted with their faces set towards the west not later than about 1000 A.D. To quote the words of an authority¹ on the linguistic side of the problem: "Their language proves that they once inhabited Northern India, but as no Indian writers have left any documents describing this people, their mode of life in India, and the most interesting point of all, why they emigrated, must for ever remain a matter for conjecture. It is, however, surprising what can be proved from our present knowledge of their language, which, it is generally admitted, must rank as an independent eighth among the seven modern Indian languages of the Aryan stock, based on Sanskrit. To begin with, the grammatical peculiarities of the language of the Gypsies resemble those of the modern Aryan languages of India so closely that it is impossible not to believe that they were developed side by side. Comparing Gypsy and Hindi, for example, we find that their declensions are based exactly on

¹ "Gypsies," by B. Gilliat-Smith (*The Caian*, vol. xvi. No. 3).

the same principle, that neither has a real genitive case, that both decline their adjectives only when used as nouns. Now it is generally held that these modern forms came slowly into existence throughout the eleventh century, when the old synthetical structure of the Sanskrit was broken up and thrown into confusion, but not quite lost, while the modern auxiliary verbs and prepositions were as yet hardly fully established in their stead. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that the Gypsies left India before the tenth century, when they could have carried away with them, so to speak, the germs of the new construction, absorbed on Indian soil."

From the words they borrowed from Persia, Armenia, and Greece, we know that the wanderers passed through these countries on their way westward, but, since no Arabic or Coptic words are found in the Gypsy tongue, we infer that they were never in Egypt. The theory of the Egyptian origin of the *Romanitshels* probably arose from legends which they themselves set afloat.

Two stories were repeated by the Gypsies. They said that they were Egyptian penitents on a seven years' pilgrimage. The Saracens had attacked them in Egypt, and, having surrendered to their enemies, they became Saracens themselves and denied Christ. Now, as a penance, they were ordered to travel for seven years without sleeping in a bed. A second story was that their exile was a punishment for the sin of having refused hospitality to Joseph and

the Virgin Mary when they fled into Egypt with the newborn Christ-child to escape the anger of Herod.

Associated with the Gypsies are other legends which may have been invented by them for similar purposes. An old tradition asserts that Caspar, one of the three Magi, was a Gypsy, and that it was he who (as their ruler) first converted them to the Christian religion. The Lithuanian Gypsies say that stealing has been permitted in their favour by God because the Gypsies, being present at the Crucifixion, stole one of the four nails, and therefore God allows them to steal, and it is not accounted a sin to them.

Needless to say, the foregoing statements were not delivered to Alma Boswell. Of their actual history the Anglo-Romany folk know nothing, but this does not prevent them from holding some curious notions about themselves. So, in response to Alma's question about the origin of the Gypsies, I replied that great scholars believed his race to have come from India.

"Oh, I think they're wrong," said Alma. "Far more likely we came from the land of Bethlehem. Being a *rashai* (parson), you'll know the Bible, I suppose, from cover to cover. Well, you've heard of the man called Cain. Now, don't the Old Book say that he went away and married a black-eyed campergal, one of our roving folks? I reckons we sprang from them. We was the first people what the dear

Lord made, and mebbe we shall be the last on earth. When all the rest is wore out, there'll still be a few of our folks travelling with tents and wagons."

Such was Alma's idea of the origin of the Gypsies.

"But there," he continued, "you must read my Uncle Westarus's big book all about our people. There was a doctor and a lawyer, wery kind gentlemen, real *bawré raiaw* (swells), who used to talk to my uncle for hours on end, and they wrote down every word he said, and then he wrote them a sight of letters, wery long ones, and they are all of 'em in print. So if you reads that book, you'll larn all as is known about us."

Alma's Uncle Westarus was certainly a remarkable Gypsy, possessing quite a library, which he carried about with him on his travels. It is on record that at the age of fifty-five his library included several volumes of fiction, history, poetry, and science, a large Bible, a Church of England Prayer Book, Burns's *Justice*, as well as English, Greek, and Latin dictionaries.

For the information of those who may not already know it, the volume designated by Alma "my uncle's book" is a most valuable *vade mecum* for Gypsy students entitled *The Dialect of the English Gypsies*, by Dr. Bath Smart and Mr. H. T. Crofton.

There was a strong dash of Gypsy pride in Alma's remark that the Boswells were the only real Gypsies left. "These others all about us are *kek tatsho*" (not

genuine), he said, with a wave of the hand ; "they're only half-breeds."

"But," I queried, "are not the Herons and Lees good Gypsies?" Then, veering from his first statement, he admitted that the families I had named might be allowed a place among the old roots.

Then followed a discussion about grades of Gypsy blood. These were classified by Alma—

1. The Black *Romanitshels*, "the real thing."
2. The *Didakais*, or half-breeds, who pronounce the Romany words *dik akai* (look here) as *did akai*.
3. Hedge-crawlers, or mumpers. "There's a lot of 'em up London way," said Alma. "We'd scorn to go near the likes of them—a *tshikli* (dirty) lot, not Gypsies at all."

In his last remark Alma certainly hit the nail on the head. The distinction between the Gypsy and the mumper cannot be too strongly emphasized. Anyone who has known members of our old Gypsy families, such as the Boswells, Grays, Herons, Lees, Lovells, Smiths, Stanleys, and Woods, will never again make the grave error of confounding the Gypsy with the mumper.

Rising from our hollow in the sand, we walked a little way between the tents, and when Alma took the railway crossing for a ramble in the town, I betook myself to his mother's tent. Having just aroused from sleep, the old lady was somewhat absent-minded, but she was quickly on the alert at hearing my greeting in Romany.

"What gibberish is it you're talking, my gentleman?"

"You understand it well enough, I'm thinking, mother."

So blank was her look, so well-feigned her ignorance, that for the nonce it seemed that after all the ancient language of the tents was a delusion and a dream.

Then methought of a plan I had tried before. Having for many years made a study of Gypsy pedigrees, I have often been able to give a temporary shock to a Gypsy's mind by telling him the names of his great-grandfathers and of his uncles and aunts, paternal and maternal. "How came you to know all this, Mr. Hall?" my Gypsy will ask. "You certainly don't look an old man."

It was now my turn to pretend ignorance.

"If it's not being very inquisitive, Mrs. Boswell, I am wondering what your maiden-name may have been?"

"That I won't tell you, and nobody in this town knows what it was."

"Is that really so? Fancy, no one in Blackpool knows your maiden-name."

"Not a soul." (This very solemnly.)

"Then what if I can tell you?"

"Well, what was it, my gentleman?" eyeing me curiously.

"You are one of the Drapers—Old Israel's daughter, if I'm not mistaken" (looking straight into

her large eyes as though reading the information at the back of her brain), "and your two sisters were Rodi and Lani."

If a stone figure had spoken, she could scarcely have looked more amazed, and, quite forgetting herself, she exclaimed—

"*Av adrê, mi tshavo, and besh tălê*" (Come inside, my son, and sit down).

Mrs. Boswell's manner was now so amiable, and her voice so soft, that as she handed me cake and tea, I felt as if I had known her all my life. All who have ever met a pure-bred Gypsy will know what Romany politeness is, and how charming a sense of the fitness of things these wanderers possess. As one who has worked hard at Gypsy genealogy, I have myself often been surprised at one thing. A member of the *kawlo rat* (black blood) will betray no inquisitiveness in regard to his tiresome interlocutor who may be a perfect stranger to him. How many of us, I wonder, would care to be subjected to such an inquisition as we sometimes inflict upon a Gypsy by our interrogations as to his ancestry? Yet the Gypsy apparently takes it all with complacence and good humour.

When taking mine ease behind the scenes in a Gypsy camp, it has often amused me to observe how extremes meet. After all, the tastes of the high and the low are not so very far removed. If the duchess is proud of her blue blood and her ancestral tree, so is the Gypsy of her black blood and lengthy pedigree.

I have known "swells" who liked their game so "high" that it almost ran into the fields again, a taste akin to the Gypsy's liking for *mulo-mas*. The Gypsy mother's love for her black cutty joins hands with the after-dinner cigarette in my lady's boudoir. It goes without saying that politeness is a stamp of both extremes.

In the cool of the evening I wandered inland to a sequestered camp, where Isaac and Sinfai Heron, those aristocrats of their race, sat by their fire in an angle where two hedgerows met.

"We likes a bit o' quiet, you see," said the slender, gracious Sinfai, when I asked why they had pitched on a spot so far from Blackpool's South Shore.

"Get the *rai* one o' the rugs to *besh opré*" (sit upon), said Isaac to his grandson Walter, who trotted off briskly to a large tent, and reappeared with a smartly striped coverlet, which he spread for me beneath the hedge. A second grandson, with a similar alacrity, set off at Sinfai's bidding to find sticks for the fire. The devotion of these lads to their grandparents seemed to spring from a sense of comradeship rather than reverence, and the quaint deference paid in turn by the old people to the boys impressed me not a little—a thing I have often observed in Romany camps.

Old Isaac's memory carried him back to Mousehold Heath of the long ago, and, listening to his talk, one could see the brown tents and smoking fires amid the ling and fern. Among the Gypsies reclining

by those fires were the Smiths, the Maces, the Pin-folds, and the Grays—Sinfai's folk—and of course some of the old Herons. Niabai, Isaac's father, would sit mending kettles, for, like many of the Gypsies of those days, he was a tinker by calling, and when on travel would carry his grindstone on his back. Sometimes of an evening, "Mister Burrow" would walk up on to the Heath for a chat with Niabai and his wife "Crowy," so called by reason of her very dark features. Borrow picked up from Crowy many a Romany *lav* (word). Gypsy fights were common on the Heath, and at times the fern would be trampled down by the crowds who came from far and near to witness these thrilling scenes.

Old Isaac had two uncles of whom he made mention—William Heron, always known as "the handsome man," and Robert Heron, known as "the lame man." Examples of a remarkable exactness of observation are Borrow's pen-portraits of the two last-named brothers contained in the Introduction to *The Zincali*. The writer does not mention them by name, but when I submitted a memorized version of these word-pictures to my friend Isaac he at once recognized his uncles, William and Robert.

Let us open *The Zincali*.

Handsome William is standing by his horse. He is tall, as were all the men of his clan.

"Almost a giant, for his height could not have been less than six feet three. It is impossible for

the imagination to conceive anything more perfectly beautiful than were the features of this man, and the most skilful sculptor of Greece might have taken them as his model for a hero and a god. The forehead was exceedingly lofty—a rare thing in a Gypsy; the nose less Roman than Grecian—fine, yet delicate; the eyes large, overhung with long, drooping lashes, giving them almost a melancholy expression; it was only when the lashes were elevated that the Gypsy glance was seen, if that can be called a glance which is a strange stare, like nothing else in the world. His complexion was a beautiful olive, and his teeth were of a brilliance uncommon even amongst these people, who have all fine teeth. He was dressed in a coarse wagoner's slop, which, however, was unable to conceal altogether his noble and Herculean figure. He might be about twenty-eight."

William is said to have persisted in carrying his own silver mug in his coat pocket, and would drink out of no other vessel. "I'd scorn to wet my lips with a drop of drink out of a *gawjikenô kuro*," meaning the publican's mugs.

Robert, William's elder brother, remained on horseback, looking "more like a phantom than anything human. His complexion was the colour of pale dust, and of that same colour was all that pertained to him, hat and clothes. His boots were dusty of course, for it was midsummer, and his very horse was of a dusty dun. His features were

whimsically ugly, most of his teeth were gone, and as to age, he might be thirty or sixty. He was somewhat lame and halt, but an unequalled rider when once upon his steed, which he was naturally not very solicitous to quit."

Robert was always considered the wizard of the clan. Never having been married, he dispensed with a tent, preferring, like some of the deep Woods of Wales, to sleep in a barn. He was nicknamed "Church" Robert, because he was a reader and had a wonderful memory, and sometimes going to church he listened to lessons and psalms and would afterwards reel them off like a *rokerin tshiriklo* (parrot).

When I made a move to go, Old Isaac drew himself to his full height and said, "*Av akai apopli, rashai*" (Come here again, parson), and the boys to whom I had mentioned my roving experiences urged me to come and camp near them. "Let us put up a tent for you here next to ours." Sinfai, who walked to the field-gate with me, slipped into my pocket a *bita delaben* (small gift), a green wine-glass.

A sunset of rare beauty was reddening the sand-hills when I returned to the Gypsyry on the South Shore. For a while I walked up and down in the miniature fair, and before I turned my face towards the town, lights began to appear in the tent baulks and the stars came out over the darkening sea.

Next morning I was walking along the spacious

sea-front with Archie Smith for companion, and in the distance appeared a little man pushing a grinding-barrow. Quickening our steps, we overtook him and found he was Elijah Heron on his morning round. I inquired where he was stopping, and promised to visit him later in the day. My companion, the lively Archie, was reeling off for my benefit a list of the inhabitants of the South Shore Gypsyry, and had just mentioned Bendigo Purum, when, rounding a corner, we met the man himself, a very swarthy Gypsy—almost black, one might say.

“*Roker* of the *Beng*,” whispered Archie, “and you’ll *dik lesti*” (see him).

Farther along in a narrow thoroughfare we observed several Gypsy women out a-shopping, their gay *diklos* and blouses making splashes of bright colour in the crowded street. It seemed to me that Blackpool was alive with Gypsies. In the afternoon I returned to the South Shore, and, hearing the strains of a violin proceeding from a gorgeous red blanket tent in a field near the railway, I made my way thither, and to my joy I discovered Eros and Lias Robinson at home.

Here is a song which I heard from the lips of Lias—

“*Mandi’s tshori puri dai*
Jaw’d adrê kongri to shun the rashai;
The gawjê saw sal’d as yoi besh’d talê;
Yoi dik’d ’drê the lil, but yoi keka del-aprê;

The *rashai roker'd* agen *dukerin*, *pen'd dova sos a laj*,
But *yov keka jin'd mandi duker'd yov's tshai*,
Puker'd yoi'd romer a barvelo rai."

Translation.

"My poor old mother
Went into church to hear the parson;
The gentiles all laughed as she sat down;
She looked into the book, but she could not read;
The parson talked against fortune-telling, said it was a shame,
But he never knew I had told his daughter's fortune,
Told her she'd marry a wealthy squire."

Lias was full of reminiscences of wanderings through the heart of Wales, and I listened with keen interest to his talk about the deep Woods. In my readings of Leland's writings I had come upon the mention of Mat Wood whom, in after years, I had the good fortune to meet in Wales. During his Welsh wanderings, Lias had met several sons of John Roberts, the harpist, concerning whom I had learned much from Groome's delightful book, *In Gipsy Tents*. Here I may mention that Old John Roberts was an occasional visitor to Lincolnshire in days gone by. He travelled widely with his harp, on which he was a talented player. My wife, who hails from the Fen country, remembers John's visits to her native village of Fleet, near Holbeach in Lincolnshire, where he would play on the parish green, as well as on the lawns of private houses. A venerable-looking, bearded man, who might have passed for a clergyman, he was a welcome guest in the home of my

father-in-law, where he would play old airs to a pianoforte accompaniment.

The afternoon and evening which followed my morning ramble were crowded with Gypsy experiences. At the back of a large tent sat Kenza Boswell fiddling, while his daughters danced with exceeding grace.

Next, Noarus Tânô, in one of his skittish moods, kept me in fits of laughter for ten minutes. He was the humorist of the Blackpool camp.

Entirely unaccustomed to controlling his imagination, Noarus will tell an extraordinary tale in which he himself plays a part, with no other object than to amuse his hearer, or to lift himself a little higher in your esteem. And just as no one is expected to believe the narratives of Baron Munchausen, so the Gypsy in telling his "lying tale" is perfectly content with the laughter of the listener. This gay spirit of exaggeration certainly stamps the following tale told by Old Tânô.

The scene is the kitchen of the village inn, and poultry-lifting is the topic of conversation. It is Noarus who speaks—

"There's a farmer's wife up in the willage what's been blaming a two-legged fox for robbing her hen-roost. I say it's some low dealer what comes out of the town with a light cart on a shiny night when the stormy winds are blowing, so as folks shan't hear him at work. You knows the sort, but us Gypsies has a different way. When did you ever know any



THE GYPSY'S PARSON WITH HIS FRIENDS.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]



FRIENDS AT THE FAIR.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]

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of us to meddle with anythink in these here parts? Don't your farmers buy ponies off us? Ain't we highly respected by the gentle-folk for miles round? Why, there was a squire up in Yorkshire, a prize-poultry fancier, as know'd my people wery well. We often camped on his land and never meddled with nothink. He trusted us so much that he comes down to our tents one day and says to my daddy—

“‘I want to beg a favour of you, Tâno. I'm going abroad for a while, and I want you and your son to take charge of my poultry farm while I'm away.’

“Well, my daddy and me took charge of his prize fowls, and when he come back again, how do you think he found things, my gentlemen?”

The company, profoundly impressed by the speaker's discourse, exclaimed with one voice—

“All right to a feather.”

“Nay, that he never did. *We'd ate the hull blessed lot!*”

Mindful of my promise to visit Elijah Heron, I sought out his tent, and I had to stoop very low to get in the doorway. In my pocket was a heavy, silver-mounted brier pipe possessing a large amber mouthpiece. This I presented to the old man, and it was good to see his face light up with pleasure. “*Tatsheni rup si kova*” (Real silver is this), he said, pointing to the mountings. “A *swêgler's kek kushto* without *tuvalo*” (A pipe's no good without tobacco),

I remarked, handing him a cake of Black Jack. He lighted up and looked as happy as a king.

Noticing that I was slightly deaf, he recommended oil extracted from vipers as good for deafness. The mention of snakes took him back to his sojourn in the Antipodes. "I never talks of *saps* (snakes) but I thinks of the days when I was travelling in 'Stralia. One night I got leave from a farmer to stop near a river, but I didn't *hatsh odoi* (remain there) for more than an hour or two, for I found there was *saps* about —nasty, hissing critturs. A black man as come down to the river to water some hosses told me that the *saps* sometimes *maw'd* (killed) animals near the river, so I packed up my traps and kept on the road all night. Give me Old England, I say. I'm right glad to be back here."

In a little tent hard by, I heard Poley and his wife singing as I said "Good-night" to Elijah. Happy, twinkling eyes they were that looked out at me from that little tent door as I passed. I envy you that merry heart, Poley, that evergreen spirit of yours, and, recalling your face, I see again the array of Gypsy tents as twilight dropped its purple veil on Blackpool's pleasant shore.

CHAPTER VIII

A TRENTSIDE FAIR

OVERNIGHT a welcome rain had fallen upon a thirsty land, and morning broke cool and grey, with a lively breeze stirring the tree-tops, and shaking the rain-drops from the grasses, as I strode along the banks of the river Trent, with my face set towards West Stockwith Horse Fair. The long, dry summer was drawing to a close, and there was an agreeable sense of novelty in the rain-drenched aspect of the countryside. After a harvest prematurely ripened by an exuberance of sunshine, brown-cheeked September was now hastening to splash here a leaf and there a spray with rich colour, and on this particular morning it seemed to me that reeds, flags, and willows were taking on autumnal tints earlier than usual. Occasionally, from the river bank, I spied a water-rat or a coot swimming amongst the sedges, and once on the path stretching before me a pert wagtail—the Gypsy bird—foretold, as the Gypsies say, a coming encounter with roving friends.

Pleasantly enough my early morning walk terminated at the old-world Trentside village of my destination. By this time, between the vapours

rolling overhead, the sun had appeared, and was gilding the barges moored to a primitive quay below the long line of straggling houses. On the Lincolnshire side of the Trent quite a colony of Gypsy vans had drawn up on a turfy plateau, and their owners were now to be seen crossing the river by ferry-boat, their laughter floating to me over the water. This was by no means my first visit to the riverside horse fair, and after refreshing at one of the inns, I went down the lane to the fair-ground occupying two fields, in the larger of which were already assembled horses and dealers in a state of lively commotion beyond a fringe of ale-booths and luncheon tents ; while in the smaller field were gathered numerous Gypsy families with their carts and smoking fires.

Never in my life do I remember to have witnessed such a horde of ancient vagabonds of both sexes as on this occasion, and with no little delight I stood and gazed upon the picture. What struck me in particular was the motley character of the party. Decrepit great-grandfolks mumbling together ; grandfathers in ragged garb and battered hats ; wizened grandmothers sucking their pipes ; aged uncles and aunts in time-stained tatters ; wives in their teens dandling babies ; bright-eyed children drumming happily on the bottoms of inverted pots and pans ; merry lads and lasses, interspersed amongst an assembly of the quaintest rag dolls it has ever been my fortune to behold. It seemed to me as if all the old Romany

folk of several counties had met together for the last time in their lives.

Moving into the larger field, I had not gone far before I felt a tug at my sleeve, and, looking round, I saw the two lads whom I had met with Jonathan by the watermill. They led me straight to a little covered cart drawn under the hedge where Boswell was conversing with 'Plisti Smith.

As I have said elsewhere, the play-spirit is strong in the Gypsy, even in his latter years, and while talking with my two friends up came a comical-looking Gypsy, Charley Welch, who must have been nearer ninety than seventy, and, picking up a potato lying on the ground—the large field had grown a crop of potatoes that summer—he laughingly dropped it into Jonathan's coat pocket.

“There, don't say that Old Charley never gave you nothink.”

After that I walked with Jonathan among the horses, and we came upon Flash Arno and Black Înan, who found time to accompany us to one of the refreshment booths where the talk ranged through a variety of topics. Înan knew Mister Groome, the book-writer, up Edinburgh way. He had met him there not long before in company with my friend Frampton Boswell. I soon found that these Gypsies did not hold with folks writing books about their race and telling the *mumpli gawjê* (nasty gentiles) about their ways.

No one loves a little fun more than the Gypsy,

and generally he means no harm by his playful romancing. After all, he is but a grown-up child, and loves to make-believe. The Gypsy's world is a haphazard one, in which luck plays a large part. He knows nothing of the orderly cosmos of providence or science. I make these remarks by way of prelude to examples of this spirit.

Who can help laughing inwardly as the Gypsy weaves a romantic tale about you, all for the benefit of a stranger? And in the course of my morning's ramble through West Stockwith Fair I had several experiences of the kind.

"See that little dealer over there?" said Peter Smith, indicating a small Gypsy man holding a tall black horse by a halter. The animal looked gigantic by the side of its owner.

"Come along with me, and while I *roker* (talk) to him, *marw puker a lav*" (don't speak a word). Then we both went up to the little Gypsy, and with the gravest of countenances Peter began to spin a long romance all about an imaginary sister of mine who lived at Brighton and was wanting just such a horse as the one before us. It really was a fine animal, and I could not refrain from stroking its glossy skin.

Peter continued: "This here gentleman doesn't ride hisself, you see, but his sister has asked him to look out for a horse, and this one 'ull just suit her." I found it difficult to preserve silence, but somehow I managed to do so. Finally, Peter took me aside

and talked mysteriously about nothing in particular, and quietly bade me walk away. A few minutes later I beheld Peter quaffing a large mug of ale evidently at the little man's expense.

Moving in and out among the throng, I presently walked out along the road, and there I came upon Hamalên Smith, who, after some talk, suggested a bit of fun. Pointing to a Gypsy camp down a lane, he said—

“That's Belinda Trickett sitting by the fire with her children. Go you down the lane and have a little game. I'll stop here and see how you get on. You don't know the woman, I suppose?”

“Not I. She's a stranger to me.”

“That's all right. Togged as you are, she'll never take you for a parson, not she. Mind you look severe-like and say to Belinda, ‘Is your husband at home? What's his name?’ It's Harry, but she's sure to say it's something else.”

Down the lane I went, and, approaching Mrs. Trickett and family, I drew out a notebook and pencil—a sure way to frighten a Gypsy. Why these things should suggest “police” I can scarcely say, but they do. The woman's clay pipe dropped from her mouth and fell upon the grass, and beneath the brown of her cheeks a pallor crept. Mrs. Trickett was alarmed.

“What is your husband's name?”

“George Smith.”

“When will he be at home?”

"I can't say. He's gone to the fair."

Under their mother's shawl three tiny children huddled like little brown partridges beneath an outspread wing, a sight which caused me some pricking of heart. The biggest child kept saying, "What does the *gawjo* want, mammy?" Just then I looked up the lane and saw a man coming down, who by his jaunty air I guessed was the woman's husband.

"*Kushti sawla* (Good morning), Mr. Trickett; take a little *tuvalo*." I handed him my tobacco pouch. "I've come a long way to see you. Ask me to sit down a bit, now I've got here."

Mrs. Trickett's face was a study in wonderment, as I sat down for a friendly chat. "*Dawdi*," said she, "you did *trashar mandi* (frighten me). I thought there was *tshumani oprê*" (something up).

When Hamalên Smith, from the top of the lane, saw that the episode had arrived at a happy termination, he strolled down the lane and joined us.

A far-travelled Gypsy is Hamalên, and many a tale can he unfold.

"One morning," said he, "a policeman came up to my wagon and told me as how twenty-four fowls was missing from the next field to where we was stopping. Somebody had stole 'em in the night. 'Of course you suspects us,' says I to the policeman, 'but you're wrong. We've never touched a feather of 'em.' However, nothing would do but the man

must search my wagon from top to bottom, and for all his trouble he found nothing. I know'd very well I hadn't touched 'em, and I was telling him the truth.

“‘Wait a bit,’ says he. ‘Didn’t I see *three* vans in this field last night as I was going along the high road?’

“‘Yes,’ I replied. ‘My boys have gone on in front with the other wagons.’

“Says he, ‘That looks suspicious. I must make haste and find them. Where have they gone?’

“‘I can’t say, for I don’t know myself.’

“‘Well, I shall have to come with you, and you must show me where to find them.’ The policeman jumped up and sat on the seat along with me and my wife, and off we went to find the boys. Of course it was plain to see by the wheel-marks just outside the gate which way they had turned, but when we got to the cross-roads about three miles further on, the road was that hard and dry that no wheel-marks could be seen. Now I could easily have misled the policeman, but I thought it best to try to find the boys as quick as I could, for I didn’t believe for a minute they had done it. Looking down the road, I saw the boys’ *patrin* (guiding sign). The policeman didn’t know what I was looking at, and it wasn’t likely as I should show him our signs, so I says we’ll take this road, and we turned off to the left.

“‘How did you know which way the boys had gone?’ asked the policeman. ‘Was it some-

thing tied on that tree bough hanging over the road?'

" 'I never sees nothing on the tree bough,' says I.

" I thought to myself the policeman must have been reading some tale about the Gypsies. Anyway, he had heard something about *patrins* and such-like, but I wasn't going to be the one to larn him our signs, so I changed the subject.

" 'Yon's my boys on in front,' says I. The policeman began rubbing his hands and smiling. At last we caught up with the boys, and the policeman searched inside the two wagons and found nothing. Then he says—

" 'I might as well look on the top,' and he climbed on to the roofs of the wagons.

" 'Hello, what have we here?' says he, in a way that made me turn warm. He lifted up a dead pigeon.

" 'Where did you get that from?' I asked the boys.

" 'Picked it up a bit o' way down the road. It had just killed itself on the telegraph wires by the wood side.'

" After that, the disappointed policeman went away, and the thieves were never found out.

" Another time we draw'd into a rutted lane lying off the high road. We had our three wagons, and at night we always covered the big one up, because

we didn't sleep in it. It was a nice quiet lane, and we thought there would be nobody to trouble us as there was no willage near. But about midnight a man knocked on the wagon and woke us up.

“‘What are you doing here?’

“‘No harm, I hope. We'll clear out first thing in the morning.’ He said he'd been knocking at the big wagon what was covered up, and he couldn't make anybody hear.

“Well,’ says I, ‘whatever you do, don't you touch that big wagon agen.’

“‘Why, what's in it?’

“‘Wild beasts, for sure—a *lion and a tiger*.’

“You'd ha' laughed at the way that man made hisself scarce. Next morning, as we draw'd out of the lane, we met a policeman.

“‘I hear you have some wild beasts in that big wagon of yours. Wasn't it a bit dangerous stopping so near the highway?’

“‘Well, we're clearing out in good time.’

“‘Get along with you then.’

“A few miles further on the road we come to a little town, and as it was market day we pulled up in the big square, and I took the cover off the big wagon. Just as I was doing this, who should come up but the policeman we'd met in the early morning.

“‘Where's those wild beasts of yours?’ says he.

“‘Oh,’ says I, ‘I'll soon show you.’ And I went inside my brush and carpet wagon and brought out

two big rugs, and I showed him a tiger skin and a lion skin, both lined with red. 'There's my wild beasts,' said I.

"Talk about laughing, I thought that policeman would never ha' stopped."

CHAPTER IX

TAKEN FOR TRAMPS—AN EAST ANGLIAN FAMILY

DAY after day, in the woods around our village, the autumnal gales roared and ravened with unabated fury, snapping brittle boughs, cracking decrepit boles, and piling up drifts of brown leaves around grey roots protruding like half-buried bones through the mossy woodland floor. Then right in the midst of it all came a spell of calm weather, as if summer had stolen back to her former haunts in sylvan glade and ferny lane. Call it by what name you please, this brief season of sunny repose following upon the heels of the tempestuous equinoctials is a time when some of us are impelled, as by a primal instinct, to shake off the collar of routine and take the road leading over the hill into what realm of adventure beyond.

Fully a week the summer-like interlude had held sway in the land. Upon the newly-turned furrows shimmered a golden light. A dreamy haze trailed its filmy skirts over hill and dale. In narrow lanes invisible threads of spiders' silk stretched from hedge to hedge, and wayside tangles again were silvered over with a fine dust suggestive of July. Amid the

lingering clover-flowers bees buzzed and blundered. Through the still air, leaves of maple and chestnut, like red-winged insects, twirled down to the grass, and the tall elms in the village churchyard littered their yellow foliage upon the graves. Everywhere, serenity, repose, peace, save in restless hearts chafing at the humdrum of tasks grown monotonous by reason of long-continued performance. For who with a soul fully awake can resist the lure of the road at gossamer-time?

Thus it came to pass one afternoon that my wife and I, slipping out of our drowsy village, took the upland way which after numerous windings brought us into the Great North Road. Our plans were of the flimsiest. It mattered little whether we went north or south, so long as we were absent for a few days. On reaching the far-famed highway we stood under the branching arms of a finger-post, and tossed pennies to determine the course of our itinerary. "North" having won the toss, we footed it gaily in that direction. To be sure, our semi-Gypsy garb, donned for this jaunt, was not long in taking on a coating of road dust, and we were about to shake off this clinging powder, when the rattle of wheels was heard behind us, and almost immediately a dogcart slowed down by our side, and the driver, a rubicund farmer, amicably invited us to take a lift, an offer which was gladly accepted, and we climbed aboard the conveyance.

"I've allus had a feeling for folks like you, and

I offens give 'em a lift as I'm passing back'ards and forrards on the ramper. Afore I pulled up just now I says to myself, 'They've seen better days, I'll be bound.' Maybe you've been in the army? Least-ways, I thought you seemed to hold yourself up pretty straight in your walk. I've done a bit of soldiering myself. Once at a big do-ment in London, I was in the Queen's Escort. Yes, I've been about a bit in my time. I dessay you two's got a goodish way to go yet afore you come to your night's lodgings.

"Ay, dear me," he went on, "we offens has your sort calling at our place—my farm's a few miles farther along this way—and one day not long since a poor chap knocked at our door and asked for work. He was a parson's son, so we gave him a lightish job and fed him well and bedded him in the barn for three or four nights, till his sore feet got right agen. Poor fellow, he worn't much good at labouring work, but we liked to listen to his tales; he could tell you summut now."

Thus he rambled on after the manner of a garrulous Guardian of the Poor who had acquired an interest in tramps.

"Yon's my place among the trees, so I must leave you here."

We thanked him for his kindly lift, and, rounding a bend in the highway, were glad to relieve our pent-up feelings in laughter over the good man's misconception.

Now, as everyone knows, who has journeyed

along it, the fine old turnpike abounds in travellers of every shade and grade. Not once or twice on its turfy wayside have I fraternized with "Weary Willies" boiling their tea in discarded treacle-tins. Even now as we went along, two or three tramps passed by, one of them coming up to beg a few matches, the others scarcely giving us a glance.

Hearing the rumble of an approaching vehicle, we looked towards the bend of the road, and round it came what looked like a carrier's cart drawn by a horse apparently old, for it proceeded slowly, and the cart creaked and jolted as if it, too, were ancient. As it jogged nearer, I saw it contained but a single occupant—a brown-faced little man who wore a faded yellow kerchief—and, stepping into the roadway, I greeted him with *sâ shan* (how do?). Whereupon he pulled up. "I heard what you said just now, but you've made a mistake. I'm no Romany—I'm a showman, an Aunt Sally man, bound for Retford."

Now a Gypsy will frequently deny his blood. Knowing that his kind live under a ban, he has no desire to draw attention to himself. But, looking at this Aunt Sally man, I saw that he had told the truth. His face was freckled. No real Gypsy freckles. After all, as Groome says, "It is not the caravan that makes the Gypsy, any more than my cat becomes a dog if she takes to living in a kennel."

Our road now became a gradual descent into a clean, flower-loving village, where amid the trees we caught the gleam of a large canvas booth in a field,

and there were knockings of a mallet to be heard. Nor was it long before we learned what was afoot. Within a tavern's comfortable parlour, a coloured playbill informed the world that Harrison's travelling theatre would that evening present a sensational drama—*Gypsy Jack*—and in due time we found ourselves seated among the cottagers and farm-hands, enjoying a highly entertaining, though garbled, version of Mr. G. R. Sims's *Romany Rye*. Opening with a Gypsy encampment in which the gaily dressed Lees sat talking round a fire in a forest glade, we were successively shown Joe Hackett's shop, the race-course at Epsom, the deck of the *Saratoga*, the cellar near Rotherhithe, and the Thames by night. The play seemed a not inappropriate episode in our Gypsy jaunt.

Years afterwards, during one Derby week, I saw Mr. Sims's *Romany Rye* remarkably well played at a South London theatre. In connection with this play an amusing story is told. The managers of the Princess's Theatre in London were anxious that the new drama should be announced in the "Agony" column of *The Times*. Like many another one, the advertisement clerk at *The Times* office could make nothing whatever of the mysterious words *Romany Rye*.

"What the deuce is this *Romany Rye*?" he asked the bearer of the strange document.

"If you please, sir," said the messenger, whom the manager of the theatre had sworn to secrecy—"if

you please, sir, I think it's the name of a new liverpad."

"Well," remarked the official, "*The Times* is a great paper and can do without padding. Take it away."

And the advertisement was declined.

From the door of the canvas theatre it was an easy walk to the little town of Newark-on-Trent, at one of whose pleasant hostelries we spent the night, our window overlooking the ruined castle by the waterside. It had been in our minds to continue our walk next morning along the Great North Road, but at breakfast a small paragraph in a newspaper brought about a quick change in our plans. The item of news ran thus—

"*THE ROMANIES AGAIN.*"

"Our friends, the gipsy Greys, are still with us in Grimsby, lamented Mr. Councillor E—— last evening, and he wanted to know whether something could not be done to get them to clear out. The Town Clerk had assisted them somewhat, and one or two had gone, but there were still four families encamped at the back of T—— Street, New Clee. Inspector M—— said he had visited the encampment and he must say that the caravans were very clean. They could not be said to create a nuisance. 'It is not the tents that are a nuisance,' replied the lively representative of the H—— Ward, 'but the parties

themselves, who trespass in the backyards of the houses in that neighbourhood. It is no uncommon thing on waking up in the morning to find a donkey or a goat in your backyard or garden.' The Inspector stated that Eliza Grey, the owner of the vans, had informed him they would all be going away in a few days."

It was the sight of the Romany family name which altered our plans. The East Anglian Grays are a good type of Gypsy not to be encountered every day, hence we decided to lose no time in taking the train for Grimsby. It was a crawling "ordinary" by which we travelled, and at a little wayside station a few miles out of Newark, a lithe, dark fellow carrying a pedlar's basket stepped into our compartment, and at once I recognized in him my old friend Snakey Petulengro. How his face lit up on seeing me, for we had not met for years. I was so much struck by his altered bearing that I could scarcely believe my eyes. He seemed now as gentle in his manner as once he had been wild. The sight of him brought back Gypsy Court and all its associations. He said he had left the old home, his father and mother having passed away. On my inquiring about his sister Sibby, he said she had married a Gypsy and, tiring of Old England, had gone to 'Merikay. As Snakey quitted the carriage at Lincoln, an observant passenger remarked—

"There goes one of Nature's gentlemen."

By mid-afternoon the slender hydraulic tower

glowed rosily in the sunlight above Grimsby Docks; and since the fishing-port had no particular charm for us, we proceeded to Cleethorpes, preferring the more airy shore and being eager to see the Gypsies. As might be expected, the summer-like day had brought a goodly number of late holiday-makers to the sands, and as we moved in and out among the groups near the pier foot, I heard a donkey-boy address someone not far away—

“Would the lady like a ride?” The lad’s features, bearing, and tone of voice were distinctly Gypsy, and, seeing he was within hail, I looked towards him and said—

“*Dova sê kushto maila odoi*” (That’s a good donkey there).

His face beamed with delight, and from his lips sprang the question—

“*Romano Rai?*” (Gypsy gentleman?)

“*Âwa; kai shan tîro foki hatshin?*” (Yes; where are your people camping?)

In gratitude for the explicit directions he gave, I placed a sixpence in his hand, and his remark was “*Dova’s too kisi, raia*” (That’s too much, sir). “*A hora* (penny) would have been *dosta* (enough) for *mandi*” (me). This boy was one of the Grays, and, following his instructions, we had no difficulty in locating the Romany camp.

It was early evening when we strolled forth upon an expanse of grass parcelled into building plots, where in a corner between the hedgerows were

drawn up, with the doorways facing south, several substantial *vâdê* (caravans) near which some large tents had been erected. The Grays, who were silently moving to and fro, revealed by their interested side-glances that they had already heard of somebody's inquiries concerning themselves, and when we advanced to offer our civil and friendly greetings to two women who were washing pots before an outside fire, every politeness was shown to us. They rose and spread a horse-rug for us upon the ground. "*Dai ta tshai*" (mother and daughter), thought I; nor was I wrong. The older woman, diminutive, lean, and somewhat bent with age, informed me that she was Eliza Gray, and the younger was her daughter Lena. As we talked by the fire, a goat appeared and rubbed its nose affectionately against Eliza's knee. Said she: "This is an old pet of ours. We's had it for years. I picked it up in Scotland."

In late September the sun goes down early, and a chilly wind now set in from the North Sea. In the baulk of the old lady's tent a coke brazier was glowing invitingly, so we all moved under cover, and, seated on a dais of clean straw covered with rugs, listened to tales and talk, the brazier's crimson gleam being our only light. After some discussion of mutual acquaintances, the conversation drifted towards *dukerin* (fortune-telling), a subject never very far from the thoughts of a Gypsy woman.

"How I've *sal'd*" (laughed), said Eliza, "at those *dinelê gawjê* (foolish gentiles) what come to our tent

to be *duker'd*. One time I put a crystal on a little table covered with oilcloth, and I ax'd the young lady if she couldn't see her sweetheart in it. 'Yes, I can,' she says, 'and it's just like his face, but oh, lor, in this glass ball he's got a tail.' I nearly laughed straight out, for I'd sort of accidentally put the crystal on top of a monkey picture. The oilcloth was covered with all sorts of beastses, don't you see?"

A superstitious family, the Grays have a characteristic way of recounting their own traditions. Here is one of Eliza's tales—

"Once we were stopping by a woodside. The back of our tent was nigh agen a dry ditch full of dead leaves, and one night we lay abed listening to sounds, a thing I can't abide. Well, there was rummy folk about in them days, so when we hears a footstep in the wood just t'other side of that there ditch, I ups wi' the kettle-prop and peeps outen the tent, and listens, but no, never a sound could I catch; all was still as the grave. Till long and by last there comes a rustling in the leaves, and the bushes parts like something trying to make a way through. Then I lifts up the kettle-prop, and I says to myself, if blows are to be struck, Liza had better be the first to strike, when there, straight afore me, stands a woman waving her poor thin arms about, but saying nothing. At that I drops the kettle-prop and screams, and my man Perun jumps straight up. 'They're killing my Liza, they are.' But by that

the *mulî* (ghost) had gone like a flash of lightning. Next morning we ax'd at the keeper's house down the lane, and the missis tell'd us as how a *rawni* (lady) was once *maw'd* (murdered) in that wood, so it would be her *mulî* as I saw that night. Oh, yes, I believe in *mulê*, I do."

During the telling of this tale two of Eliza's sons, Yoben and Poley, sauntered up and stood listening behind their sister Lena. It was Yoben who now added his contribution of ghost-lore.

"Why, yes, of course, mother, there's *mulê* (ghosts). Don't you remember after Dolferus died, his voice used to speak in the tent to Delaia? She says it really was his voice as nat'ral as life, and it made her shiver to hear it. One day she went to a parson for advice. He told her the next time it spoke, to say: 'I promise you nothing. Begone!' Well, sure enough, the voice came again, and she remembered to say what the parson had told her, and she never heard the voice no more. My Uncle Ike asked Delaia one day—

"'I say, my gal, did you really hear Dolferus's voice?'

"'Yes; it was his and no one else's.'

"'Is that the *tatshipen* (truth), my gal?' Ike seemed anxious to know the truth of the matter."

"Dreams is funny things," put in Poley, "and I've had some wery queer 'uns in my time. Once

I dreamt I was walking along a narrow shelf of rock, and on one side of me was a stony wall like a cliff, and on the other side the edge of the path hung over a terrible steep place. Right away below was a river of fiery red stuff pouring along. You could smell it. I thought this rocky road was the path to heaven, and I was trying to get there, but, 'pon my word, it was no easy matter. Now I see'd a tiger chained to the rocky wall on my left hand, and a bit further on a big lion was tied up. These here critturs was hard to get past. I had to go wery near the dangerous edge what looked down on to the burning river. What a fright I was in; it made the sweat run off me. Sometimes I had to crawl on my hands and knees to get round a big rock in the middle of the path. I felt as if I never should get where I wanted to. Well, after a lot of scrambling and slithering, for my feet gave way sometimes—I had naily boots on—I got to the top of the path, and in the dazzling light, like the sun itself on a summer day, there sat a grey-haired, doubled-up man, a wery aged man, with his chin resting on his hand. It was the *Duvel* (God), and when he see'd me coming, he sat up and held up his hand, forbidding me to go any further. He didn't speak a word, but I knew that his uplifted hand meant 'Go back.' And just then I woke. That's my dream of trying to get to heaven."

"There's a lot about heaven and hell in God's

Book, isn't there, *rashai*?" said Old Eliza. "A *rawni* (lady) used to read all about them places to us on a Sunday, but that were years ago, and I used to like to hear her talk about the blessed Saviour riding on a *maila* (donkey) into the big town. She said they nailed him to a cross on Good Friday, and when we was young I remember we all used to fast on that day. We ate no flesh—nothing with blood in it—it would be a sin to do that. If we took anything to stay our hunger it was nothing but dry bread, and our drink was water. We didn't *tuv* (smoke), and we didn't *tov* our *kokerê* (wash ourselves) on that day. I don't know whether there be such places as heaven and hell. I reckons we makes our own destiny. Heaven and hell's inside us; that's what I think."

Lena, however, had her own ideas. "This life is everything there is, I reckons, and when we're dead, that's the end of us. Life is sweet, mind you, and we's a right to be as happy as we can. Mother's getting old, you see, and has had her fling. I mean to have a good time. Why, last Sunday me and Poley was going off to get some nuts in the woods, but mother stopped us——

"It's *Beng*'s work getting nuts on the dear Lord's day."

"Yes," says Yoben; "I've heard our old daddy say that the *Beng* likes nuts, and I'd sartinly scorn to go getting them onlucky things on a Sunday; I

wouldn't like to put myself in the *Beng's* power, like poor Zuba Lovell."

"What about Zuba?" asked my wife.

Then Yoben told a weird tale.

"A handsome lass was Zuba, but bad luck dogged her like her own shadow. One night she came back to the camp, for she lived with her old people, and, throwing down a few coppers she had in her hand, she said—

" 'There, mother, what do you think of that for a hard day's work?' She had done wery badly, you see. Luck never seemed to come her way at all. And after supper she wandered out a little way from the camp. The moon and stars was shining as she walked round and round an old tree, a blasted old stump, black as a gallows-post. As she kept on walking round it, she said aloud, 'This game won't do for me. It's money I want and money I'll have. I'd sell my blood to the *Beng* to have plenty of money in my pocket always.' The words was hardly out of her mouth when a black thing, like the shadow of the tree, rose up from the ground, and, lor, there was the wery *Beng* hisself, and after he'd promised her what she had wished for, he wanished. And after that no more grumbling from Zuba; no more complaints about her bad luck. She always had plenty of money now, and she bought herself trinkets and fine clothes till everybody was 'mazed at her, and of course she had kept it to herself what took place that night by the



A MAID OF THE TENTS.

[*To face p. 112.*

old tree. Days and weeks went by, till one night Zuba was missing from the camp. Her old folks sat up by the fire waiting for her, but no Zuba came. At last her daddy set out to look for her, and there by the foot of the tree lay Zuba's frock and shawl, and when he took 'em back to his wife's tent, the poor woman screamed and fainted right away, and old man Lovell walked up and down all night, saying, 'Oh, my Zuba, my blessed gal, we shall never see you no more,' and they never did. The *Beng* had fetched her. That's the end of Zuba Lovell."

While listening to these tales in the tent, the flight of the hours passed unobserved, till a distant clock boomed out the hour of ten.

"You'll *wel apopli* (come again), my dears?" said Eliza, as we retired amid the smiles and bows of the Gypsy family.

Next morning found us again in the camp. Already the Gypsies had breakfasted, and were making preparations for "*tovin-divus*" (washing-day). Sun and wind promised an ideal day for such a purpose. It was a thing to be noticed that the articles about to be dealt with lay in two heaps on the grass.

Among the Gypsies there is a ceremonial rule which holds it to be *mokadi* (unclean) to wash together in the same vessel "what you eat off with what you wear." This was the meaning of the separated articles, and then I observed two zinc vessels lying

ready on the ground. Said Old Eliza to Lena, "I'll take this lot, and you take that lot." To begin with, they both cleansed their hands and arms in hot water, and as they did this I remarked how brown were Lena's arms, whereupon she replied with a laugh—

"*Āwa, raia* (Yes, sir), monkey soap won't fetch that off"—a modern rendering, I take it, of Ferdousi's saying, "No washing will turn a Gypsy white."

Now as our friends were about to become much occupied, we proposed to stroll round the camp and pay calls on the other Gypsies in the same field. "Stop a bit," said Eliza, and, slipping into the tent, she came out with a black bottle. "You'll take a drop of my elderberry wine and a bite o' cake," pouring out the claret-coloured liquid into two glasses fished out from an inner recess. While enjoying this snack on the grass, I took out from a breast pocket a white unused handkerchief which I spread on my knee. Presently Old Eliza slyly took it by the corner and twitched it away, giving me in place thereof a neatly folded napkin brought from the tent, and I saw that I had broken a Gypsy custom in converting a handkerchief into a crumbcloth. Said the old mother, "That *mol* (wine) is old, and should be *kushto* (good). It's some we buried in a place till we came round again."

In another corner of the field were encamped Fennix Boswell and his stepson Shanny, and, going forward, we found the pair seated at their tent door

handling fishing-rods. On seeing us they rose and invited us into the tent, where we sat down. Shanny showed us some of his pencil drawings.

"I've got one of a parrot somewhere; I must find it," said he.

"*Áwali, muk man dik o rokerin-tshiriklo*" (Yes, let me see the talking-bird), I replied, and in a minute or two he handed me a really clever sketch.

These two Gypsies had just come down from Scotland, where they had been travelling during the summer months, and we got talking about Kirk Yetholm. The Blythes, related to old King Charley Faa, were acquaintances of theirs. It appears that one of the King's sons named Robert, a rollicking fellow, was fond, as Gypsies are, of practical jokes, and some of his escapades are still remembered in the Border Country. One of Fennix's tales about this fun-loving Faa may well find a place here.

One spring morning Bobbie started off on a foray with some of his pals. The air was clear, and a soft wind was blowing over the Lammermoors on whose slopes the lambs were gambolling. The Gypsies had walked a few miles, and the mountain air had sharpened the edge of their appetites. Looking round for a farmhouse or a cottage where they might ask for a kettle of boiling water to brew their tea in the can—such as few of the Faas would ever travel without—Bobbie was the first to espy some outbuildings, at the back of

which stood a shepherd's cottage, and, taking upon himself to be spokesman, he bravely started off for the cottage, the men resting meanwhile at the foot of the hill. As he approached the door, a fine savoury smell greeted Bobbie, making him feel ten times more hungry than before. He knocked gently at the door, which stood ajar, but no one came, and all was quiet within. He repeated his knock, and, taking a step forward, found the kitchen empty. Before the fire stood a tempting shepherd's-pie of a most extraordinary size, and its appetizing steam quite overcame any scruples which otherwise might have lurked in the heart of Bobbie Faa. Not for one moment did he hesitate, but, nipping up the dish, he speedily ran down the hill with the pie under his arm. Not knowing how he had come by it, his mates could scarcely believe their eyes when he laid the pie on the grass, and they praised the gude-wife who had so kindly given them such a feast. When the dish was empty, he gave it to a pal, telling him to take it back to the gude woman and say how much they had enjoyed the pie. It happened to be a sheep-shearing day, and the shepherd's wife had gone to call her husband and his fellows to their dinner. She had just returned to the kitchen when the Gypsy lad arrived with the empty dish, and on handing it back to her with smiles and thanks, a torrent of abuse was poured forth on the poor boy's head, as the woman now grasped the situation and

became aware of the fate of her pie. Just then her husband and the other shearers appeared round the corner, and, hearing what had befallen their dinner, the infuriated men seized the lad and gave him a sound drubbing.

CHAPTER X

PETERBOROUGH FAIR

THE twentieth century has witnessed a remarkable revival of certain old-time pleasures in the form of pageants and pastoral plays, folk-songs, and dances, but it should not be overlooked that in our midst still linger those popular revels, tattered survivals of medieval mirth, called pleasure-fairs, held periodically in most of our old country towns. It is true, these ancient fairs are not what they were, Father Time having laid his hand heavily upon them, with the result that not a few of their features which were reckoned among our childhood's joys have vanished.

Gone are the marionettes, the wax-works, the ghost-shows. Departed, too, are many of the mysterious little booths, behind whose canvas walls queer freaks and abnormalities were wont to hide. Perhaps, however, when the travelling cinema has outworn its vogue, the older "mystery" shows will reappear by the side of the Alpine slide, the scenic railway, and the joy wheel.

Still renowned for their wondrous gaiety are a few of our larger fairs, whither huge crowds flock



ON THE EVE OF THE FAIR.

Photo, Rev. H. H. Matteson.

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by road and rail for a few hours of rollicking carnival. I have in mind such events as Barnet September Fair, Birmingham Onion Fair, the October merry-makings at Hull, Nottingham Goose Fair, and the like, but even these, owing to a variety of reasons, are now of shrunken dimensions.

Fairs of whatever sort are generally occasions of friendly reunion, not only for show-people and *gawjê* visitors, but also for Gypsies who love to forgather on the margins of the fair-ground, or upon an adjacent common, where they compare notes and discuss the happenings since their last meeting.

Borne on the crisp October air, the chimes of Peterborough floated over the city roofs, reaching even to the fair-grounds, where I was one of the large holiday crowd which hustled and laughed and tossed confetti in mimic snow-showers. When in quest of Gypsies, the first half-hour you spend in wandering about a fair is a time of pleasurable excitement. Who can tell how many old friends you may meet, or what fresh dark faces you are about to encounter?

As I was saying, the crowd was hilarious, and, having so far recognized no Romany countenance up and down the footways between the coco-nut shies and shooting-galleries, swing-boats and merry-go-rounds, it occurred to me that a little more breathing-space might be found upon the open pasture where horses were being bought and sold, and, pushing along

in that direction, I was brought to a standstill at the foot of the steps leading down from a gilded show-front. Walking with the airs of a fine lady, there came down those steps a young Gypsy attired in a yellow gown and tartan blouse, with a blazing red scarf thrown over her shoulders upon which her hair fell in black curls. It was this coloured vision as much as the block in the footway that held me up for the nonce. Another moment, and Lena Gray, Old Eliza's daughter, brushed against my shoulder, yet, as often happens in a crowd, she failed to see me. Therefore, into her ear I dropped a whispered Romany phrase at which she started, and, recognizing me, exclaimed—

“*Dawdi, raia*, this *is* a surprise!”

It was but a few steps to the sheltered spot in a field opposite the horse-fair where her brother Yoben sat fiddling by the side of the living-van. Even before we came up to him, something arrested my attention—the unusual shape of his violin, which, as Lena informed me, her brother had made out of a cigar-box picked up in a public-house.

Our field corner had a most agreeable outlook. Beyond a stretch of greenest turf, dotted with caravans and bounded by the reddening autumn hedgerows, lay the pleasure-fair, a sunlit fantasia of colour, from which, like feathery plumes, ascended puffs of white steam topping numerous whirling roundabouts. Pleasant it was to sit out here in the calm weather chatting with the Grays, whom I had

so recently met on the Lincolnshire sea-border, and even while we conversed there passed by a little party of gaily-dressed Gypsies—two rather portly women of middle age and two slender girls.

“Who are those people?” I asked.

“Some of the *gozveré* (cunning) Lovells,” replied Lena. Then I remembered that for some time past I had carried in my notebook several cuttings grown dingy with age, relating to traditional practices characteristic of this family. Two paragraphs will suffice as specimens.

“A domestic servant told a remarkable story yesterday before a West London magistrate. She said that a gipsy called at the house and asked her to buy some laces. She refused, and prisoner then offered to tell her fortune for a shilling. Witness agreed, and the woman told her fortune, and she (witness) gave her two shillings, and asked her for the change. Prisoner said she would tell her young man’s name by the planet. Witness had a half-sovereign and two half-crowns in her purse, and prisoner asked her to let her have the coins to cross the palm of her hand with. She handed her the coins, and the woman crossed her palm. She then asked her to fetch a glass of water, and, on her returning with it, told her to drink it. Afterwards she told her to pray, and then, apparently putting the 10s. and the two half-crowns in her pocket-handkerchief, placed the handkerchief in her bodice,

and told her not to take it out for twenty minutes. After that the woman left.

"The magistrate: 'Did you take the handkerchief out?'

" 'Well, I waited for twenty minutes or so, and then I took it out, and instead of the 10s. and the two half-crowns I found two pennies and a farthing.' (Laughter.)"

Obviously, the above is a variant of the ancient Gypsy trick known as the *hokano bawro* (big swindle). Something equally Gypsy, as we shall see, clings to our second example.

"The local police have had their attention engaged during the week in connection with an alleged extraordinary occurrence whereby a shopgirl became, under supposed hypnotic influence, the dupe of two gipsy women. From inquiry it appears that on Saturday afternoon two gipsy women, having the appearance of mother and daughter, entered a baby-linen shop, and seem to have exerted such a remarkable influence over the girl that she was induced to hand over to them articles of wear amounting in value to between £8 and £9. Before they left the shop she recovered her self-possession sufficiently to express doubt as to whether they would return with the goods or money, and her fears were allayed somewhat by receiving from her visitors in the shape of security a lady's beautiful gold ring and chain. Subsequently the young lady, suspecting the genuine-

ness of the pledges, took them to a jeweller, who declared the value of the ring and chain to be not more than a couple of shillings. The shopgirl is unable to account for her want of self-possession in the presence of the gipsies, and states that she felt she might have given them anything they asked for. There were a good many gipsies located in the district, but on a visit to the encampment in company with the police the girl did not recognize her two visitors. The remarkable occurrence has given rise to much comment in the locality."

Here is something strangely akin to the Romany mesmerism to which allusion is made by "The Scholar-Gipsy," whose

"... mates had arts to rule as they desir'd
The workings of men's brains;
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will."

As is well known, Matthew Arnold's poem is based upon the following passage in Joseph Glanvill's *Vanity of Dogmatizing* :—

"That one man should be able to bind the thoughts of another, and determine them to their particular objects, will be reckoned in the first rank of Impossibles; Yet by the power of advanc'd Imagination it may very probably be effected; and story abounds with Instances. I'll trouble the Reader but with one; and the hands from which I had it, make me secure of the truth on't. There

was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who, being of very pregnant and ready parts, and yet wanting the encouragement of preferment, was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there, and to cast himself upon the wide world for livelyhood. Now, his necessities growing daily on him, and wanting the help of friends to relieve him; he was at last forced to joyn himself to a company of Vagabond Gypsies, whom occasionally he met with, and to follow their trade for a maintenance. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem; that they discover'd to him their Mystery; in the practice of which, by the pregnancy of his wit and partz he soon grew so good a proficient, as to out-do his Instructours. After he had been a pretty while well exercis'd in the Trade; there chanc'd to ride by a couple of Scholars who had formerly bin of his acquaintance. The Scholars had quickly spyed out their old friend, among the Gypsies; and their amazement to see him among such society, had well-nigh discover'd him; but by a sign he prevented their owning him before that crew; and taking one of them aside privately, desir'd him with his friend to go to an Inn, not far distant thence, promising there to come to them. They accordingly went thither, and he follows; after their first salutations, his friends enquire how he came to live so odd a life as that was, and to joyn himself with such a cheating beggerly company. The

Scholar-Gypsy having given them an account of the necessity, which drove him to that kind of life ; told them, that the people he went with were not such Impostours as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of Imagination, and that himself had learned much of their Art, and improved it further than themselves could. And to evince the truth of what he told them, he said he'd remove into another room, leaving them to discourse together ; and upon his return tell them the sum of what they had talked of ; which accordingly he perform'd, giving them a full account of what had pass'd between them in his absence. The Scholars being amaz'd at so unexpected a discovery, earnestly desir'd him to unriddle the mystery. In which he gave them satisfaction, by telling them, that what he did was by the power of Imagination, his Phancy binding theirs ; and that himself had dictated to them the discourse they held together, while he was from them : That there were warrantable wayes of heightening the Imagination to that pitch, as to bind another's ; and that when he had compass'd the whole secret, some parts of which he said he was yet ignorant of, he intended to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned."

One sometimes wonders whether the world would have cared one jot about the revelations which the

Oxford Scholar here promises, for to the majority the "Gypsies" are almost tabu.

In a letter which I received from that perfect Scholar-Gypsy and Gypsy-Scholar, the late Francis Hindes Groome, he tells how he once stumbled upon a typical critic.

"Three or four years ago I gave a lecture on Gypsies at Greenock, and a well-dressed man came up after it.

"‘There were some things,’ he remarked, ‘that I quite liked in your lecture, but on a good many points *you were absolutely wrong.*’

"‘Of course you’ve studied the question?’ I asked him.

"‘Yes,’ he replied. ‘I looked up the article "Gypsies" in Dr. Brewer’s *Dictionary of Fable* just before coming along.’”

Talking of critics reminds me how I once received something of a shock to the nerves during the opening sentences of a lecture on "Gypsy Customs." Not far from the platform where I stood, there sat a well-to-do horse-dealer who, having married a pure-bred Gypsy, was presumably in possession of "inside information." The vision of his face, all alertness and curiosity, caused me a momentary disturbance. What would this critic make of my disclosures? How would he take my revelations? Warming to my subject, however, I was made happy

by my auditor interjecting such remarks as "That's right." "He's got it." "Where does the man get it all from?" Sometimes he would punctuate his exclamations by vigorously slapping his knee and laughing aloud. Certainly his ejaculations added a piquancy to my tales gathered from Gypsy tents.

But to return to Peterborough Fair.

About the middle of the afternoon, as I stood on a grassy mound overlooking the horses, I spied near a group of animals my old friend, Anselo Draper, flourishing a long-handled whip. This swart East Anglian roamer wore a dark brown coat of Newmarket cut, slouch hat of soft green felt, and crimson neckerchief neatly tied at the throat. Along an open space between the rows of horses sauntered his two pretty daughters, Jemima and Phœbe, bare-headed and bare-armed, their laughing voices ringing out merrily, while at their heels followed two little brothers cracking whips as became budding horse-dealers.

Quite a head above the Gaskins and Brinkleys with whom she was talking loudly, stood Wythen, Anselo's wife, who, happening to look my way, smiled and came towards me, holding out the empty bowl of her pipe.

"Got a bit of *tuvalo* (tobacco) about you, *rashai* (parson)? I'm dying for a smoke."

"*So bok ke-divus?*" (What luck to-day?) I inquired, handing over my pouch.

"*Bikin'd tshîtsî*" (Sold nothing), she replied, jerking her whip towards the ponies, "but I'll *duker* (tell fortunes) a bit this evening," adjusting her black hat with its large ostrich feathers and gaudy orange bow set jauntily at the side.

On my pretending to ridicule *dukerin*, she said—

"Look here, now, what's the difference between a Gypsy telling fortunes at a fair and a parson *rokerin* (preaching) in church of a Sunday?"

"If that's a riddle," said I, "it's beyond me to answer it."

"Well, when folks do bad things, you foretell a bad future for them, don't you? And when they do right, you promises 'em a good time? What's the difference then between you and me? I'm a low-class fortune-teller and you's a high-class fortune-teller. You's had a deal of eddication. My only school has been the fairs, race-courses, and sich-like. But I bet I can tell a fortune as well as you any day. Let me tell yours."

And she did.

As we stood there and talked, I noticed that the woman looked worried about something, and presently I heard her say to Anselo, "I haven't found it yet." It was a brooch that she had lost. Then I told how once I lost and found a ring. One Sunday morning just before service, I stood on the gravel swinging my arms in physical exercises as a freshener before going to church, and suddenly I heard the tinkle of my ring on the yellow gravel.



MIDLAND GYPSIES.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]



SOUTH-COUNTRY GYPSIES.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]

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As only a few minutes remained before church time, I thought of a child's method of finding a thing quickly, and, turning myself round three times, I tossed upon the ground a smooth black pebble, and, going forward, lo, there was the ring close to the pebble.

Eyeing me curiously, Wythen remarked—

“Do you know what we says about people as does that sort of thing? Well, we reckons they has dealings with the *Beng* (Devil).

“When I was a little 'un, my old granny would do things like that, and she used to say that when you sees a star falling you must wish a wish, and if you do it afore the *stari pogers* (the star breaks) your wish will come true.”

It seems that among Gypsies “wishing a wish” sometimes means a curse. It was at Peterborough Fair in 1872 that Groome saw a blind Gypsy child—made blind, he was told, through the father wishing a wish. Akin to this is the belief in the evil eye. A Battersea Gypsy mother would not let her baby be seen by its half-witted uncle, for fear his looking at it should turn its black hair red.

After leaving Wythen, I sauntered along, making mental notes of Gypsies all around, among whom were local Brinkleys, the far-travelled Greens, some Loveridges, and other Midland Gypsies. I was about to move away towards the pleasure fair, when a dealer standing near some ponies caught my eye. I had never seen the man before, but as he looked a thorough Gypsy, I drew alongside and accosted

him in Romany. For a moment he stared at my clerical frock-coat and broad-brimmed hat, and then calmly remarked—

"I say, pal, you look born to them things you've got on, you do really. You reckons to attend fairs at these here cathedral places, don't you? Didn't I once see you at Ely, or was it Chester?"

To this man I was nothing more than a Gypsy "dragsman" disguised in clerical garb. Accordingly, he lowered his voice as he said—

"See this here pony? Will you sell it for me? You'll do it easy enough with your experience. On my honour it ain't a *bongo yek* (wrong 'un), nor yet a *tshordo grai*" (stolen horse).

"What about the price?" I asked.

"If you get a tenner for it," he replied, "there'll be a *bâ* (sovereign) for yourself. What say?"

"*Saw tatsho* (All right). *Jaw 'vrî konaw*" (Go away now). And in less than ten minutes after taking my stand by the little animal, I had a bid from a young farmer of the small-holder type. His offer was accompanied by some adverse criticism. Who ever heard a man praise the horse he intended to buy?

"Examine the pony for yourself," said I.

He looked at its teeth. He lifted its feet one by one. He pinched and punched it all over. The pony was next trotted to and fro, and so pleased was the farmer with the animal's behaviour that he promptly handed over ten pounds and led the pony

away. On seeing that I had completed the business, my Gypsy friend, who was just round the corner, came up, and on my giving up the money, he put one of the sovereigns into my hand. When I got away I had a good laugh to myself, and it took me some time to get my face straight.

Walking back into the heart of the town, I saw a dusty, ill-clad party of Gypsies going slowly along with a light dray drawn by a young horse with flowing mane and long tail, and when they reached the corner where I was standing, I spoke to the woman who was at the horse's head. She said she was a Smith, and when I pointed to the name Hardy on the dray, she remarked, "Oh, that's nobbut a travelling name." It may be noted that Gypsies are extremely careless about their names.

At a later hour in a field behind the pleasure fair, I found the comfortable *vâdo* of my friend, Anselo Draper, and tapped at the van door with the knob of my stick. Quickly the door opened, and thrusting out his dark, handsome head, Anselo shouted, "*Av adrê, baw*" (Come in, friend).

What a contrast! Outside: a very babel of blaring sounds, a dark sky reflecting the glow of a myriad naphtha flares. Within: cosiness and warmth, red curtains, glittering mirrors, polished brasses, and a good fire. Over the best teacups (taken tenderly from a corner cupboard) Anselo and his wife talked of their travels. They had been as far north as Glasgow that summer, and had sold a good *vâdo*

(van) to one of the Boswells at Newcastle Fair. They had decided to winter at Southend-on-Sea. "We shall make a tent, a big one, and very jolly it will be with a *yog* (fire) in the baulk. To be sure, there will be plenty of mumpers (low-class van-dwellers) around us, but we shall not be the only *tatshenê Romanitshels* (real Gypsies) stopping there."

Next, Anselo plunged into an account of a low dealer's trick at the horse fair. It seemed that this dealer had sold two horses to a farmer for forty pounds. A stranger coming up to the farmer offered to buy them at a higher price, so into a tavern they retired to talk things over. During drinks the stranger continually offered more money for the horses, and the farmer remained there a longer time than was good for him. At last when the man was hopelessly muddled the stranger disappeared. Nor had the horses so far been seen again.

"But there's not so much of that done as there was. My father knew a Gypsy who died up in Yorkshire, a desprit hand at *grai-tshorin* (horse-stealing), and to this day they say, 'If you shake a bridle over his grave, he'll jump up and steal a horse.'" Both Wythen and Anselo laughed merrily as I told a tale I once heard of a Gypsy who had been "away" for a space. Coming out of the prison gate, he was met by a fellow who asked him what he had been in there for.

"For finding a horse," was the reply.

"But surely they would never jug you for finding a horse?"

"Well, but you see I found this one before his owner had lost him."

Anselo admitted that this sort of thing was not at all uncommon in the old days, and two of his uncles had to take a trip across the water for similar practices.

When I left my friends and hastened to catch my train, the pleasure fair was in full blast, noisy organs, cymbals and drums, shrieking whistles, and the dull muffled roar of innumerable human voices, sounds which long haunted my ears, and, looking back from the moving train, there still floated from the distance the din and rattle of the receding fair.

CHAPTER XI

A FORGOTTEN HIGHWAY—"ON THE ROAD" WITH JONATHAN—THE PATRIN—THE GHOST OF THE HAYSTACK

"WE was all brought up on this Old Dyke. We's *hatsh'd* (camped) on it in all weathers. I knows every yard of it. Ay, the fine *kanengrê* (hares) we's taken from these here fields."

The speaker was my old friend, Jonathan Boswell, who with his tilt-cart had overtaken me whilst strolling along the grass-grown Roman Ermine Street which traverses the broad Heath stretching southward of Lincoln. At the Gypsy's cheery invitation, I joined him on his seat under the overarching tilt. Behind us were the diminishing towers of the old city, and right on ahead the chariot-way of the Imperial legions ran, straight as an arrow along the Heath. Not a wild expanse, mind you, like your Yorkshire moorland with its wimpling burns and leagues of heather, though I daresay our Heath, now so admirably tilled, was savage enough in the days when "the long, lone, level line of the well-kept war-path, marked at intervals with high stones or posts as a guiding-line in fog or snow, stretched through

a solitude but rarely broken, except by the footfall of the legionaries and the plaint of the golden plover sounding sweet from off the moorland." Turf-covered from hedge to hedge for many a mile, the High Dyke, as the old road is now called, may well be described as a forgotten highway. Indeed, I have tramped along it mile on mile without meeting a soul, unless mayhap it was a sun-tanned drover slouching at the heels of half a dozen bullocks, or a village lad asleep in a hedge-bottom, with a soft-eyed motherly cow or two grazing not far away.

On this particular morning near the end of April, an unclouded sun lit up the verdant cornlands and larch spinneys. It shone upon the loins of the sturdy nag between the shafts. It touched into a brighter gold the gorse-bloom on the wayside bushes, and provoked the green-finches to fling their songs into the air from lichen-palings and bramble sprays. Onward we journeyed, bumping and jolting over the uneven turfy road, and occasionally dodging the mounds of earth thrown up by the burrowing rabbits. What a picturesque figure my companion presented in his faded bottle-green coat adorned with large pearl buttons. His close-fitting dogskin cap imparted to his swarthy, sharply-cut features a not inappropriate poacher-like air, and I fancied the old man's wrinkles had deepened on his brow since our last meeting, just after his wife's death up in Yorkshire.

Sitting back under the hood, Jonathan here burst out with a pretty little reminiscence.

"D'ye know, my pal, what this here bit o' the Old Dyke brings to my mind? Ay, deary me, it takes me back to times as'll never, never come no more—the days when I were a lad along with my people and our delations a-*beskin* (resting) on this here wery grass we's passing over. See, there, under that warm bank topped with thick thorns: well, I's slept there times on end with my dear mammy and daddy in our tent, and my uncles and aunts would be *hatshin* (camping) right along this sheltered bit. I can see it all while I's talking to you—the carts with their shafts propped up and the smook a-going up from the fires afore the tents, and the ponies and donkeys grazing under the trees yonder. Ay, my son, them were the times for the likes of us.

"There's one thing I minds" (this with a merry twinkle in his eye). "I'll tell you about it. It were a fine summer morning, somewheres about six o'clock. My mammy and daddy was up making a fire to boil the kettle. I heard 'em bustling about, and I ought to ha' been up to help, but I were lazy-like that morning. Then comes my daddy a-talking quick to hisself, and I know'd summut were the matter. He lifts up the *tan-kopa* (tent-blanket) and hollers at me as I lay stretched out upo' the straw—

"*'Hatsh oprê, tshavo, kèr sig. De graiaw and mailas saw praster'd avrî. Jaw'vrî an' dik for len.'* (Get up, boy, make haste. The horses and donkeys have all run away. Go forth and look for them.)

"I were out and off in a jiffey. I never stopped to

get dressed. What's more, me not thinking what I was a-doing, I throws away the only thing I had on my back—my shirt—just as you toss off your coat when you's in a hurry, and away I goes down the long road to find the animals. Whilst I were away, all the family, my big brothers and sisters, and them delations as I spoke of, had gathered round the fires for *sawla-hawben* (breakfast), an' they hadn't finished when I got back with the hosses and donkeys. I'd clean forgot how I were fixed, an', my gom, didn't they laff when they set eyes on me; an' my blessed mammy, she shouts—

“ ‘*Kai sî tîro gad, m'o rinkeno tshavo?*’ (Where's your shirt, my pretty boy?) Into the tent I dived, an' I weren't long dressing, for I wanted to be gitting my share o' the *balovas* an' *yoras* (ham and eggs).”

Occasionally the spinneys skirting the deserted road obscured the view of the far-off Wolds, but one could forgive these temporary interventions, for the sprays of larch and beech hanging out from the little woods were delicate in their new spring garb, and as the breezes caught them they rose and sank with a beautiful feathery droop. Now across the fields on our left hand there came into view a familiar landmark, Dunston Pillar, concerning which I once heard a story from the lips of Bishop Edward Trollope, a whilom neighbour of mine.

At one time Lincoln Heath was a vast unenclosed rabbit warren dotted over with fir woods and quarries, and at times travellers lost their way upon it. So

Dunston Pillar was erected, and a lantern was placed on top to guide benighted wayfarers over the Heath. Doubtless the old lighthouse served its purpose well, yet it did not always enable people to reach their own homes in safety, for the locality was infested with robbers on the look out for travelling gentry. Not far from the Pillar stood an old coaching inn, the "Green Man," and one night, after assisting their driver to his box, two gentlemen who had been carousing there thought it prudent to remind their man thus: "John, be sure you keep the Pillar light upon your right, and then we shall reach Lincoln safely." However, when the two awoke at daybreak and found themselves still near the Pillar, one of them called out, "Why, John, where are we?" Upon which, John replied drowsily from the box, "Oh, it's a' roight, sir, the Pillar's on our roight." And so it was, for he had been driving round it all night.

As we jogged along, Jonathan would occasionally jerk his whip towards a rich pasture, and with a sly wink would say, "We's *puv'd* our *graiaw* in that field more than once." Let me explain. In order to give their horses a good feed, the Gypsies when camping on the High Dyke would turn their animals overnight into a nice fat pasture, taking care, of course, to remove them early in the morning.

At this point we drew rein, and took a meal under the lee of a plantation in whose boughs thrushes fluted and willow-wrens made fairy music. Not far away, couch-grass fires sent their smoke





NETTING RABBITS.

Photo, F. R. Hinkins.]



'NEATH THE HEDGEROW.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]

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across the level surface of a loamy field, making the air of the lane pungent with the scent of burning stalks. Seated there under the spreading trees, my Gypsy companion related a poaching incident with some gusto, for it is next to impossible to dispossess the Gypsy of the notion that the wild rabbits frisking about the moors and commons are as free to him as to the owner of the lands on which they happen to be playing.

"One time when our folks was camping on the Dyke a keeper comes up to the fire. It was evening, and we was having some stew, and the keeper joined us. He were a pleasant, good-company fellow, wery different from keepers nowadays, and after the meal was over, my old mammy says to him, 'There's two things that's wery good—a drop of brandy to warm the cockles o' your heart, and a bit o' black 'bacca to warm your snitch-end.' And the keeper agreed. Then my daddy brings out a black bottle and mixes him a drink in a teacup, and us boys come peeping into the tent to listen to the tales what daddy and the keeper got a-telling. I can see 'em all a-sitting there now, my old mam a-puffing her *swégler* (pipe) and the keeper and daddy blowing a big cloud till you couldn't hardlins see across the tent for smook. But mam never gave us boys nothink from the bottle, and when the keeper began to get jolly, my dad tipped us a wink, and off goes three of us wi' the dogs, and we had a good time in the big woods. Nobody came near us, and we didn't

carry the game home that night lest we might meet a *gawjo*. We know'd a thing better than that. We hid the game in a leafy hollow, and sent some of the big gells in the morning with sacks, and they brought all home safe."

Two miles onward we stopped a few minutes at Byard's Leap to look at the large iron horseshoes embedded in the turf. It is these shoes that help to perpetuate the local legend which gives the hamlet its name. Here is the Gypsy version of the tradition.

"Hundreds and hundreds of years ago, there was a wicked witch what lived in a stone-pit wi' big dark trees hanging over it. This woman did a lot of mischief on the farms all round, witching the stock in the fields, and she cast sickness on people young and old. They say the witch was once a beautiful girl who sold her blood to the *Beng* (Devil), and that's how she got her powers. At last she grew wery ugly, and still went on working great harm. One day the folks of that neighbourhood met together and tossed up to see who was to kill the witch. It was a shepherd who had to do it, though it went against his mind, as he had often played with the witch when she was a beautiful girl. However, he promised to put an end to her, and set off to choose a horse to ride on. All the horses on the farm were driven down to a pond. One of them was a blind one, an old favourite of the farmer's, which he wouldn't allow to be killed. Now, while the horses were drinking, the shepherd

was to *wuser* a *bâ* (throw a stone) over the horses' backs into the water, and the one that looked up first was the one he was to ride. Well, if the poor old blind horse didn't lift up its head, so he saddled it and bridled it and rode off to the stone-pit. When he got there he shouted, 'Come out, my lass, I want to speak to you.'

"'I'm suckling my cubs;'—she had two bairns, and the shepherd was said to be their father—'wait till I've tied my shoe-strings, and then I'll come.' Soon she came out, and, springing on to the horse's back behind the shepherd, she dug her claws into the animal's flesh, while the shepherd rode poor blind Bayard—that was the horse's name—towards the cross-roads, and on the way there the *grai* (horse) gave a tremendous jump—sixty feet—and both the riders were thrown off; the witch was killed on the spot, the shepherd was lamed for life, and the blind horse fell down dead."

Starting from the first set of four horseshoes in the turf, I measured the distance in strides to the next set of four, and, roughly speaking, found it to be sixty feet.

Here our roads diverged, Jonathan going westward towards the "Cliff," while I took the turn for Sleaford.

Within three weeks from this meeting with Jonathan on the High Dyke, I had business calling me to the town of Newark-on-Trent, where, as luck had it, the May horse-fair was in full swing, and under

the shadow of the Castle by the waterside I met my Gypsy friend once more. In a corner of the fair-ground, which was crowded with horses, I found Jonathan in company with one of the Smiths, and the two men were drinking ale out of big horn tumblers rimmed with silver. Petulengro had a nice *vâdo*, and, going up to it, I read the name "Bailey, Warrington." He explained that he was breaking new ground, and therefore had taken a change of name. Like most Gypsies, he had some pets—two dogs, a bantam cock and hen, a jackdaw, and a canary. As Jonathan had absorbing business on hand, I did not see him again until evening, when I joined him in his tilt-cart, and we set off towards Ollerton. Underneath the vehicle were slung several tent rods, notched, or numbered, in order to facilitate the erection of the tent. Said he, "I'm expecting my nephew to join us to-morrow—that's Charley—he's promised to come after us, so I must lay the *patrins* (signs) for him."

Let us see how this is done.

At a crossing of two highways, a few miles out of the town, Jonathan went to the hedge-bottom and plucked a bunch of long grass, then upon a clearing among the tussocks on the wayside he divided the bunch into three portions, carefully placing these with their tips pointing in the direction which we were about to take.

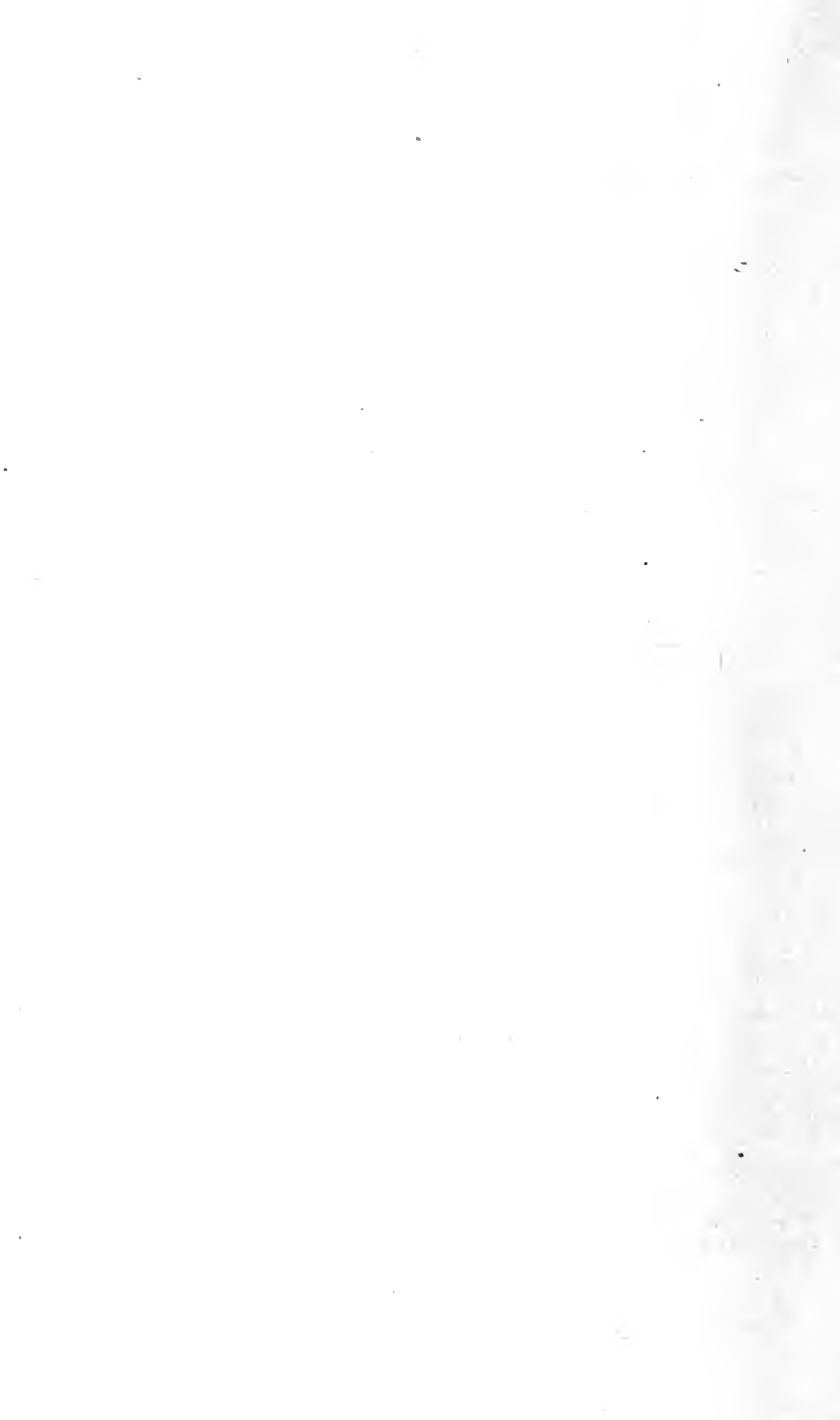
"There now," said the old man, "I've got to do this at every cross-road, for there's no telling exactly



THE GYPSY'S PARSON ON THE ROAD.

Photo, Fred Shaw.

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where we shall stop to-night. But Charley is bound to find us, for he'll *dik avrî* for *mandi's patrin*" (look out for my sign).

There are many varieties in the form of the *patrin*, for no two families use exactly the same sign. I have heard Gypsies who were about to separate into parties, discussing the particular form of *patrin* to be used by the advance guard, so that those who were following would know exactly what to look for, and whereabouts on the roadside they might expect to find it.

A Suffolk friend, whilst sitting unobserved on a fence in the twilight, watched some Gypsies laying a *patrin* formed of small elm twigs, their tips indicating the direction taken. A peculiar form of *patrin* I once saw was a wisp of grass tied round a sapling in the hedgerow.

For myself, I never see a *patrin* on the roadside without recalling Ursula's pathetic story in *The Romany Rye*. Readers who know their Borrow will remember how the woman followed her husband for a great many miles by means of his signs left on the wayside.

Between Kneesall and Wellow a halt was made, and, having lit a fire of sticks under the shadow of a wood, we warmed some stew in a black pot. As we sprawled on the grass, a fox dashed across the road with a rabbit dangling from its jaws, and Jonathan shouted in the hope of making Reynard drop the bunny, but in vain. Then I told him how once I

saw a fox capture and kill a rabbit on the slope of a warren. He was about to trot off with his prey when I gave a lusty shout which made him halt and look round at me for a moment. Seeing that I was quite a hundred yards away, Reynard dropped the rabbit, scratched a hole, and buried his capture, carefully spreading the loose earth and stones over the place with his sharp nose. Then he made for the woods. Now, though I searched diligently for that buried rabbit, I could not for the life of me discover it, the entire surface of the warren-slope being so dotted over with recent rabbit-scratchings strewn with small stones.

While Jonathan was making some small repair of the harness, I drew from my pocket a few newspaper cuttings and letters, in one of which was a dialogue between two Gypsies, a tiny boy and an aged man, who had met upon the road—

“BOY. *Sâ shan, baw, has tuti dik'd mi dadus kedivus?*

MAN. *Keka, mi tshavo, mandi keka jins tuti's dadus. Sî yov a bawro mush wiv kawlo bal?*

BOY. *Âwali, dova sî mi dadus, tatsho.*

MAN. *Has yov a pair o' check rokamiaw?*

BOY. *Âwa, dova's mi dadus.*

MAN. *Has yov a loli baiengri wiv bawré krafné?*

BOY. *Âwa, dat's mi dadus, feth.*

MAN. *Dawdi, mandi dik'd lesti tälé o drom odoi a-mongin a puri pair o' tshokaw to tshiv opré lesti's nongé pîrê.*

BOY. *Dova sî keka mi dadus, at all."*

Translation.

"BOY. How do, mate. Have you seen my father to-day?

MAN. No, my boy, I don't know your father. Is he a big man with black hair?

BOY. Yes, that's my father, sure.

MAN. Has he a pair of check trousers?

BOY. Yes, that's my father.

MAN. Has he a red waistcoat with big buttons?

BOY. Yes, that's my father, faith.

MAN. Lor, I saw him down the road there a-begging an old pair of boots to put on his bare feet.

BOY. That's not my father at all."

"A bit o' the old style, I call that," was my companion's comment.

After we had yoked in and were about to start off, my old Gypsy pulled out his handkerchief to catch a sneeze on the wing. He was successful, and, unnoticed by him, a little wooden animal fell to the grass. On picking it up, I handed back to him a dog with a tail broken off and one foot missing, and he grabbed at it excitedly, saying—

"I wouldn't *nasher* (lose) that for a deal."

This little fetish I remembered to have seen on a

former occasion. Jonathan had put it on the top of a gatepost and was talking to it, as he puffed a cloud of tobacco smoke. For some reason, he was never willing to discuss the subject.

Pursuing our journey, we came to the little town of Ollerton, and after a halt at one of the inns we travelled onward through Edwinstowe until we reached a tract of ferny, heathery country, where we drew up, unyoked and unharnessed the horse, and in wonderfully quick time had our little tent erected. You have sometimes heard people say, "Poor Gypsies," yet if you had travelled with them, as I have, you would hear it said, "Poor *gawjê* (gentiles), we feels sorry for 'em, cooped up in their stuffy houses."

There is nothing so healthy as a tent under the open sky, with the wind blowing freely around you and the birds singing their canticles in the woods hard by. I speak from experience in regard to tent life, for under Jonathan's tuition I learned long ago how to construct a Gypsy's tent of ash or hazel rods thrust into the ground and their tapering ends bent and fixed into a ridge-pole, the whole being covered with coarse brown blankets pinned on with stout 3-inch pins. (The Gypsies use the long thorns of the wild sloe, or thin elder skewers.) In such a tent I have slept nightly for many months in succession. It is grand to sit at your tent door, building castles in the air, which at any rate cost very little in upkeep.

Bosky Sherwood with its oaks and birches and uncurling bracken stretched away towards the west,



COMRADES.



GYPSIES AT HOME.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]

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and, strolling along the unfenced road, lo, an old woman with her apron full of sticks was seen coming down a glade. She turned out to be Rachel Shaw, whom we accompanied to where, round a corner, the camp of the Gypsy Shaws lay within a secluded alcove. This was a pleasant surprise. Here, by the fire, sat Tiger Shaw and his three grown-up daughters, fine strapping girls. I had often heard of "Fiddling" Tiger, whose children were said to be excellent dancers. It was said of their father that he could play tunes by thumping with his fists upon his bare chest. We sat chatting with them till the moon rose, a full golden disk, over the woods. The night air was sweet with forest smells exhaling from bursting oak-buds and sheets of wood hyacinths. A rare place for owls is Sherwood, and more than once as we sat there, a broad-winged bird came out of the black shadows and flew away hooting down the road.

Old Tiger, who hails from the Low Country between Lynn and St. Ives, remembers when the "Jack o' Lantern" used to flicker by night in those parts in the days of his childhood, and of ghost tales he has a rich store. One of his best tales is the ghost of the haystack, which I give in my own words.

"One night a Gypsy and his wife went to take some hay from a stack at the back of a mansion. As they were getting it, they looked up and saw on the top of the stack a wizened old man wearing a three-cornered hat, a cut-away coat with silver buttons,

knee-breeches, silk stockings, buckled shoes, and by his side hung a curious sword. At this sight they stood amazed, then, gathering courage, the Gypsy woman looked up and said—

“‘If this is your hay, sir, may we take a handful for our pony?’

“The figure on the stack never spoke, but nodded his head, so they took a lot, and, departing, left a trail of hay reaching from the stack to the camp. Next morning the squire of the mansion came along.

“‘You rascally vagabonds, you thieving rogues, how dare you steal my hay? If you had asked me, I’d have given you some.’

“‘But we *did* get leave.’

“‘How so?’

“Then they described the gentleman on the stack, giving the details as already told. At this the squire turned deathly pale, and laid hold of a fence to steady himself.

“‘Why, you’ve seen my old grandfather who has been dead years and years, and if he gave you leave, you can get as much of that hay as you please.’

“And you may be sure they did.”

The first grey light of dawn was creeping down the road and waking the life of the woods, when we were called from our slumbers by a cheery “Hello,” and Jonathan sprang up to receive his nephew, who had already drawn his *vâdo* upon the grass; indeed, before we had dressed, Charley had gathered sticks

for the breakfast fire, and by the time that our meal was finished, the sun was gilding the tree-tops. Now we were ready for the departure, and, moving along the road, we found the Shaws also taking the *drom* (road). By the side of the *vâdo* walked Tiger's girls, their loosened hair blowing in the wind, and going along they gathered the yellow cowslips.

Onward through the gorsy lanes we travelled together as far as Mansfield, where our merry party became divided, the Boswells taking the highway leading through North Derbyshire to Sheffield, the Shaws going westward towards Matlock, and myself setting off in a southerly direction.

Just where Robin Hood's Hills begin to rise beyond the red-stemmed pines of the Thieves' Wood, I came upon a resplendent caravan of the Pulman type drawn up on the wayside turf a long way from any village. Near by sat two persons, a man past middle age, wearing a kilt and tam-o'-shanter, who had for companion a pretty lass in her teens, with long brown hair. On the ground between them stood a big crystal jar, and with long forks the two were spearing cubes of preserved ginger. Their backs being turned towards me, they gave a little start of surprise as I went up, and, raising my hat, inquired, "Dr. Gordon Stables?"

"That's my name," said he, and, inviting me to join them on the grass, he dispatched the girl for another fork, with which very soon I, too, was spearing for ginger.

Here before me was the "Gentleman Gypsy," whose writings had been familiar to me since boyhood.

"You'll think it strange," said he, "when I tell you that I have no memory for faces, but I rarely fail to remember the look of any tree I have once seen by the roadside."

When Gypsies were mentioned, the good doctor had grateful reminiscences of them. During many years of road-travel he had often come upon the wandering folk, and he liked them. They were cheerful people who never forgot a kindness. They were most obliging withal, and readily lent their horses to pull his somewhat heavy "house on wheels" up the stiff inclines. Altogether, he had a very good word for the Gypsies.

By mid-afternoon I was standing in the churchyard at Selston, where lay the fragments of the headstone of a Romany chief, Dan Boswell. An irreverent bull was declared to have been responsible for the shattered condition of the stone upon which a quaint epitaph was now faintly visible. It ran as follows :—

"I've lodged in many a town,
I've travelled many a year,
But death at length hath brought me down
To my last lodging here."

My late father-in-law, formerly a curate of Selston, remembered how Gypsies paid visits to this grave and

poured libations of ale upon it. The adjacent common, long since enclosed, was once much frequented by the nomad tribes.

My resting-place that evening was the pleasant Midland town of Nottingham, and right soundly I slept after my long day on the road.

CHAPTER XII

THE GYPSY OF THE TOWN

IN the sunny forenoon I was walking in one of the airy suburbs of Nottingham, and, passing by the entrance to some livery stables, I noticed on a sign-board in prominent yellow letters on a black ground the surname of Boss. This it was that brought me to a standstill in front of the large doors in a high wall. "A Romany name," I said to myself. "I ought to find a Gypsy here;" and, pushing open one of the doors, I saw before me an office with masses of brown wallflower abloom beneath a wide-open window.

"Come in," said a mellow voice, in response to my knock at the little door in the porch, and, entering, I was confronted by a handsome man of fifty, evidently the master of the establishment, neatly dressed, well groomed, and unmistakably Romany.

"Mr. Boss?"

"That's so."

"*Romanitschel tu shan?*" (You are a Gypsy?)

"*Ávali, baw. Av ta besh tǎlê.*" (Yes, mate. Come and sit down.) The words were accompanied

by a low, musical laugh that was pleasant to hear. He then conducted me to a garden seat where we sat and talked in the May sunshine. Generally my companion would use the inflected dialect of the old-time Gypsies, but at intervals he dropped into the *pogado tshib*, the "broken language," as spoken by the average English Gypsy of to-day. For which lapses he apologized: "I wonder what my old dad would say to hear me *rokerin* like a *posh-rat*?" (talking like a half-breed). "One of the old roots was my daddy, who could talk for hours in nothing but 'double-words'" (*i.e.* inflected Romany). "There were the 'double-words' and the other way—the broken language. Some of us young upstarts never picked up all the 'double-words' our parents used, and now the poor old language is fast going to pieces. What with these Gypsy novels and their bits of Romany talk—my girl reads them to me—why, everybody is getting to know it. I once heard a gentleman say that our language was a made-up gibberish. But he was wrong. It's a real language, and an old one at that. But, as I was saying, it's getting blown very much nowadays. Why, down in Kent, Surrey, and Sussex there are whole villages where you can hear Romany talked on all sides of you. The little shopkeepers know it. The publicans can *roker* (talk Gypsy) a bit. The stable-boys throw it at one another. And you can't stir in the lanes without meeting a kiddie

with the eyes and hair of a Gypsy—blest if you can.”

Noticing my flow of the *kawlo tshib* (black language, *i.e.* Romany), Boss tapped me familiarly on the knee: “I can’t reckon you up at all, *rashai* (parson). How have you picked it all up? Have you been sweet on a Gypsy girl, or have you *romer’d yek?*” (married one).

Then with all a Gypsy’s restlessness, he sprang up and led me to his villa residence over the way, where, apologizing for the absence of his wife, he introduced me to his daughter, a tall girl of twenty or more, gentle, refined-looking, with fathomless Gypsy eyes and an olive tint in her cheeks.

“I’m going to take the *rashai* for a drive,” said he. “We’ll be back for tea.”

In the tastefully ordered drawing-room I chatted with Miss Boss, whose Romany rippled melodiously. A piece of classical music stood open on the piano, and several recent novels lay scattered about. On her father’s return within a few moments, I caught the sound of a horse pawing impatiently outside, and presently I was seated with Jack Boss in a smart yellow gig behind a slim “blood” animal. As we drove through the town my companion pointed to a carriage-horse in passing: “*Wafodu grai sî dova*” (a trashy horse is that), and when I translated his words he chuckled merrily. “To think that you know *that*, and you don’t look a bit like a Gypsy. Not a drop of the blood in you,

I should think. You puzzle me, you really do. Perhaps you've got it from books. I've heard of such works, but have never seen them. I suppose you priests can find it all in Latin somewhere?—Now, to look at me you'd never think—would you?—that I'd been born in a little tent" (he bent his fingers in semblance of curved rods) "and had travelled on the roads. But that's years ago, yet I like to think of those days. If they were rough times, we had plenty of fun. Don't I remember going with my old dad to visit the Grays and Herons, Lovells and Stanleys, in their tents—real Gypsies if you like. You don't often *dik a tatsheno Romanitshel konaw*" (see a true Gypsy nowadays). "It gave me a deal of pleasure the other day to meet Ike Heron in his low-crowned topper and Newmarket coat. One of the old standards is Ike. Perhaps you know him?"

By this time we were speeding between green hedgerows in the open country, and when at last we pulled up at a wayside hostelry, nothing would do but I must drink my Gypsy's health. Then the horse's head was turned for home. Romany topics being still to the fore, and having recently heard of the passing of George Smith of Coalville, I asked my companion if he had ever met the parent of the first "Moveable Dwellings' Bill."

"I can't say that I ever crossed his path, and I don't know that I particularly wanted to. His

letters in the papers used to *rile my people terribly*. We weren't quite so bad as he painted us. It was plain enough that he knew nothing of the real Romanies, nothing whatever. Why, his "gipsies" were nothing but the very poorest hedge-crawlers, with never a drop of our blood in their bodies. The man meant all right, very likely, but as for his methods—well, the less said about them the better."

As we parted after tea at his garden gate, I wished my Gypsy *kushto bok* (good luck).

"A good thing *that*, Mr. Hall, and may we both have more of it."

I retain very pleasant memories of that afternoon spent in the genial company of Mr. Jack Boss, whom I have since met several times at horse-fairs in different parts of the country.

It has fallen to my lot to know a number of Gypsies who have made their homes in our cities, and who, though moving in respectable circles, still retain the old secret tongue of the roads, as well as a marked spirit of detachment from most of the ideas of the people among whom they live. Pride of race remains. No matter how high he may climb, the pure Gypsy is proud of his birth and secretly despises all who are not of his blood. When talking of breezy commons, green woodsides, rabbits, pheasants, and the like, I have seen the eyes of a house-dwelling Gypsy grow wistful as he sighed at the visions and memories arising within him.

The sedentary Gypsies are now largely in the preponderance. Not that the tendency to settle is entirely a thing of our times. Fifty years ago, the Gypsy colony hard by my childhood's home told of a movement not then by any means new. Twenty years earlier, did not Ambrose (Jasper) Smith say to Lavengro?—"There is no living for the poor people, the *chokengris* (police) pursue us from place to place, and the gorgios are becoming either so poor or miserly that they grudge our cattle a bite of grass by the wayside, and ourselves a yard of ground to light a fire upon."

Many years prior to this complaint, the wholesale enclosing of the commons, the harassing attentions of the press-gang, the flooding of our roads by Irish vagrants, the barbaric administration of "justice," and the pressure of the times generally, had caused many a Gypsy to adopt a sedentary life. Numbers of old-fashioned Romany families, finding life no longer tolerable in England, were allured to the colonies by glowing accounts received from migrated friends of the freedom and manifold opportunities for making a living across the sea. All along since those times it may be said that no year has passed without witnessing the settlement of many Gypsies.

Some of my happiest "finds" in the way of house-dwelling Gypsies were several aged members of the great Boswell clan, living in the town of Derby, and to them I owe many reminiscences of Gypsy life

in bygone days. It was from Lincolnshire *Romani-tshels* of the same clan-name that I had first learned of the Derby colony whose Gypsy denizens were so entertaining that if ever I found myself within a few miles of their Midland town I could in no way resist going to see them. It must have been many years since first they settled there, and yet they would talk of Lincolnshire as though they had quitted its highways and byways but yesterday. Moreover, these Boswells were related to some of Borrow's originals, a fact which in my eyes lent no small glamour to these folk.

One cool spring evening I stood in a cramped yard in Derby, and, tapping at a cottage door, I heard a tremulous voice inviting me to enter. Within that little room my aged friend, Coralina Boswell, was warming her thin hands at a few glowing coals in the grate. A flickering candle on the chimney-piece cast a fitful yellow gleam on the old lady seated on the hearthrug not far from a truckle bed. Wrapped about her shawl-wise was a portion of a scarlet blanket throwing up her features, swarthy and deeply seamed, into strong relief. She begged me to take the only chair, which I drew up to the fire.

"I am glad to see you, my son. I'm a lonely old woman. My *tshävê* (children) are all far away." Here she picked up a black pipe which she had laid down on my entering, and went on chatting about her family, mentioning a daughter named Froniga.

"That sounds like Veronica."

"Yes, we name't her after the one that wiped the dear Lord's face wiv a *diklo*" (handkerchief).

This set her thoughts a-wandering, and she went on to tell how last night she saw strange things.

"I was in a *wesh* (wood), thick and green, and I went on and on, and I felt wild beasts rubbing agen me, but they never hurted me, 'cos my blessed Saviour was a-sitting wiv His angels among the clouds just above the roundy tops o' the big trees. It was beautiful to see Him there. And sometimes, as I sits here, I sees Him come into this room, as real as when you came in yourself.

"What made you come so far to see the likes o' me? It's wery kind o' you. I's travelled all through your country, and a nice part it is. I remembers the green fields all lying in the sun by the riverside." (Clearly she was thinking of the Trentside haunts of her clan.)

"Now, my son, will you *tshiv* some *kosht* on the *yog* (put some wood on the fire) and light that *váva mumeli* (other candle) on the chimbley-shelf?"

On the walls of the room were several black-framed funeral cards, in the midst of which was a blurred enlargement of a Romany *vádo* (cart), and, seeing my eyes wandering towards this picture, Coralina broke out again—

"Ah, that's my *rom's* (husband) wagon there, as

we's travelled in many a year, and there he is on the steps a-looking at me so loving-like. I *rokers* (talk) to him sometimes, forgetting he's been gone this many a year.

"Mine's a lonely life, and what would become of me I don't know, if I hadn't some kind delations living in this *gav*" (town).

As I stepped out into the narrow yard, a bright moon silvered the battered door and the little criss-cross window of Old Coralina's abode, and, walking along a crooked street, I thought of the strange life of the woman I had just left, an existence in which dreams and visions passed for realities.

In the same town lived another aged Gypsy, Eldi Boswell, whose days were chiefly spent on a couch-bed smoking and dreaming. Too decrepit to leave her cottage, she loved to bask in the glow of the fire, and I recall no more picturesque Gypsy figure than Old Eldi, with her furrowed face and her long, dark ringlets straggling out from beneath a once gorgeous *diklo*. It was easy to see that she had been a beauty in her time, and in confidential moments she would say that in her young days she had often been taken for her cousin, Sanspirela Heron (the lovely wife of Ambrose Smith), whose forename was (in *Laven-gro*) changed by Borrow to Pakomovna. Certainly one could not help being struck by Old Eldi's large eyes. Much has been written about the peculiarity of the Gypsy eye, Borrow and Leland in particular having enlarged upon this topic. Not of a soft, steady



PHOTO - FRED SHAW

A MOTHER IN EGYPT



hue like that of a pool in the moorland peat, it is a changeful eye of glittering black endowed with a strange penetrative quality.

Born about the year 1820 at Susworth, a hamlet on the Lincolnshire bank of the Trent, Eldi remembered not only the names, but a host of tales in which bygone Gypsies played a part.

My father, a schoolmate of Thomas Miller at Gainsborough on the Trent, used to speak of the riverside Gypsies whom Miller presents in his writings: *e.g.* in *Gideon Giles the Roper* he gives pictures of the Boswells, who were probably some of Old Eldi's folk.

For instance, if I had been reading in Borrow's *Gypsy Word-Book* about that famous old rascal, Ryley Boswell, I would say to Eldi—

“Did you ever know Old Ryley?”

“Sartinly, I minds him well enough. ‘Gentleman’ Ryley, they used to call him. He was a tinker, like the rest of our *mushaw* (men), but he wouldn't carry his creel (grinding-outfit) on his back like other people. He must have it on a little cart, and a pony to draw it.”

“Is it true that he had more than one wife living with him at the same time?”

“Well, yes, he had three wives. There was Yoki Shuri. You's heard tell of her, sure-ly—a wery clever woman she was at getting money. Then there was Lucy Boswell, Old Tyso's gell, a nicer woman never breathed, but Ryley was rough with

her and made her sleep in a little tent with his dogs Musho and Ponto. Nobody blamed her when she left him and went to 'Merikay with her six children. Then there was Charlotte Hammond as went away and took on with Zacky Lee. A lot of those Lees round London sprang from them. In his best days Ryley had heaps of money and travelled all over the country. He had a fine black mare, Bess Beldam, and he rode on her a-hunting with the gentry up in Yorkshire. He was partic'lar fond o' that country, was Ryley. I minds how fine he looked on his splendid mare as had silver shoes, and him in a coat with golden guineas for buttons. I's heard of him riding slap-dash through a camp, springing over the tents and scutching the *nongé tshavê* (naked children) with his *tshupni* (whip): 'I'll let 'em know who I am—Ryley Boswell, King of the Gypsies.' But at last his luck left him, and he took hisself off to London with his Yoki Shuri. Even to her as stuck to him through all, he was unkind. One day he tied her to a cart-wheel and leathered her, 'cos she told him of his ill-doings. At London, they lived in the Potteries, but he never did no good in the big city. One day, as he was skinning a rabbit, he scratched his hand and got blood-poisoning, and died in a little house underneath the railway arches. They buried him in Brompton Churchyard."

Thus she would spin on at great length about Ryley Boswell.

Another time she would talk about the Herons.

She was old enough to remember Niabai and Crowy (the parents of my aged friend, Ike Heron), as well as "handsome" William, "lame" Robert, Miller, Lusha, and other members of the same family. According to her account, these fellows were a tall, dark, big-boned, rough set.

Asked if she had ever known any Gypsy called Reynolds, Eldi replied—

"To be sure, there was Reynolds Heron as married my Aunt Peggy."

Then I understood how Ambrose Smith (*alias* Reynolds) came in his last years to adopt for his own travelling surname the Christian name of his wife Sanspirela's father, Reynolds Heron, concerning whom it is recorded that he used to fast on the five Fridays next after the season of Lent, in memory of the five wounds of the Saviour.

I used to like to hear Eldi talk of the days when artists, squires, and their ladies would pay visits to the camp. "There was my husband's Aunt 'Norna'—her proper name was Lucretia Boswell—she was a beautiful woman, and Mr. Oakley painted a picture of her wearing an orange shawl about her shoulders. She never married, and always travelled with her sister Deloraifi, who never married neither. Ay, when I was a barefooted gell with the wind a-blowing my hair about, the painting-gentlemen would get me to sit for my picture; and squires would stop us in the lanes and try to pick up our words."

Rascalities of which modern Gypsydom knows nothing would creep into Eldi's memory-pictures. I mean the wayside robberies, the bloody fights, the sheep and horse stealing of the rough old days of her girlhood. She would get so rapt away in the past that she would speak of people dead and gone as though they were living still, and, awaking to the present, would remark with a deep-drawn sigh—"But, there, I's seen none of 'em for a wery long time."

Under the heading of "A Modern Enchantress," the following note, describing my Gypsy friend, was communicated by an Irish clergyman to *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* of the year 1890 :—

"A short time since, a clergyman stopping at my house told me that some time ago, when he was assisting in the work of All Saints' Parish, Derby, he had residing in the parish a Gypsy family named Boswell. One of the family was sick, and he found the greatest difficulty in getting into the house; and when he did get in, the sick man told him that the sooner he cleared out of the house the better—if he came to talk about religion. In fact, it was only by most judicious management, and by promises not to speak about religion till the sick man spoke of it first, that he was able to establish a footing in the house. But after a little time he got on quite friendly terms with the family. He then discovered that when any of the family were sick an old aunt came into the room and seemed to perform

a kind of incantation over them. His description of her performance was very like what we read about Eastern Dervishes. She gradually worked herself up into a species of frenzy, flinging her arms about and muttering a kind of incantation or prayer, until her voice ascended into a wild scream and descended again into a whisper as the frenzy passed away, and she was left lying exhausted and apparently in fainting condition on the floor. When she arrived at this state she was immediately carried out of the sick-room by her relatives."

A grey morning with a lowering sky and splashes of rain had given place in the early forenoon to a brilliant day, and sunbeams lit up the Humber's wharves and shipping as I stepped from the steam ferry upon the Corporation Pier at Hull. Often before had I visited this busy seaport on Gypsy errands, and the cause of my present visit was to seek out the whereabouts of the descendants of Ryley Boswell, renowned in Gypsy history. From Borrow's *Romany Word-Book* I had gathered that Ryley hailed from Yorkshire, and Eldi Boswell of Derby, and the London relatives of Yoki Shuri had informed me that Hull was a likely place to locate some of Ryley's offspring. A few inquiries brought me the information that a Gypsy and his wife kept a little grocery store in a back street, which I had no difficulty in finding, though, reconnoitring outside the shop, I saw in its exterior nothing suggestive of the

Romany. Going inside, I rapped with my foot on the floor, and a middle-aged woman, only distantly resembling a Gypsy, responded to my summons. Pointing to a barrel of ruddy Canadians, I made request in Romany for two apples, and immediately a change came over her face. The sound of the Gypsy language produced a beaming smile where solemnity had sat. After making a further purchase, I was invited into the living-room, where I had no sooner sat down than the woman's husband, looking still less like a Gypsy, entered, but on my giving him a *sâ shan* (how do?) he laughed outright, and we had some fun. It tickled me not a little to hear the pair discussing my physiognomy.

"Why, he's got Newty's *noke* (nose), that he has now." And the wife asked me if I had brought news of a fortune left to them by their Uncle Newty in Australia.

"Newty—well, I *have* heard of him. Wasn't he *bitshado pawdel* (transported) to Hobart Town for horse-stealing? But for whom do you take me?"

"One of Newty's sons, for sure. And here's your father's photograph" (handing me a daguerreotype in velvet-lined case). "Now look at yourself in the glass. Why, you're the wery spit of Uncle Newton."

So I found myself taken for a grandson of Old Ryley and Yoki Shuri, and my shopkeeping friends were themselves actual grandchildren of those Gypsies of renown. Here was a lucky find, and since I was

out upon a genealogical errand, I availed myself of the present opportunity to scoop in a goodly store of facts for my increasing collection of Romany pedigrees.

A few years after this visit to Hull, a correspondent in Australia imparted to me a number of facts relating to transported Gypsies. Here are a few of his personal recollections of Newton Boswell (or Boss), whom he had known as a travelling knife-grinder at Launceston in Tasmania.

“Newton, familiarly known as ‘Newty,’ seemed a nice quiet fellow, tall and spare, with the remains of good looks. Polite and well-spoken, he was not particularly Gypsy-looking, except for his walk and build—not particularly dark. At the same time he *did* look like a Gypsy. His eyes were of a mild brown. He wore a big felt hat and a coloured handkerchief. He told me that he had been popular with ladies, that one lady who had a large house (in New South Wales, I think), and with whom he worked as a servant or driver, took a particular fancy to him, but he left that situation because he wanted to be on the move. He said he did not like remaining long in one place. Newton confirmed Borrow’s description of Ryley, in regard to his wearing gold coins as buttons on his clothes, and other details. When I read him parts of Borrow’s books, he was astonished to find in print many facts familiar to himself. He once brought round his fiddle for me

to hear him play, which he did in the energetic, spirited style peculiar to the race. He told me that he had travelled all over Australia.

"Once, many years ago, there came up to Newton's grinding-barrow in Sydney a handsome, dark, beautifully dressed, young lady who, looking him fixedly in the eyes, said—

" 'There's a Romany look about you.'

" 'I beg your pardon, madam?'

" 'There's a Romany look about you.'

" 'Why, madam, do I look any different from anybody else?'

" 'Well, you are wearing a yellow handkerchief round your neck.'

" 'Can't anybody wear a coloured handkerchief, madam?'

" 'Yes, they can, but they don't.'

" 'Well, madam, I *am* a Gypsy—a pure-bred one too—my name is Boswell.'

" 'And so am I a Gypsy — my name is Lovell.'

"She gave Newton a sovereign and invited him to call at her house. He subsequently learned that she had married some well-to-do man (a non-Gypsy) in England, who had brought her out to Australia, and that on his returning suddenly from a trip to the Old Country, he shot her in a passion of jealousy, and then shot himself."

Some weeks later I was again exploring Hull for

Gypsies. To me few things are more agreeable than to hear Romany spoken unexpectedly. Walking along a city street, if suddenly amid the din of the traffic I hear a Gypsy greeting, I experience a very pleasant emotion.

In passing along the Anlaby Road, I heard from behind me, "*Sâ shan, rashaia?*" (How do, parson?) and, looking round, I saw Mireli Heron's son, a jovial, harum-scarum fellow who has found a permanent home in Hull. I remember him as a travelling Gypsy, and his garb was then characteristic and becoming, but he had now adopted a coat, collar, and tie of the prevailing fashion. The Gypsy of the town, I find, has no desire to attract attention to himself; hence he becomes subdued in appearance, more's the pity. Having settled, he becomes "respectable," drab-coloured, unpicturesque.

At my request young Heron walked across with me to the Spring Bank, and on the way thither he pulled up at a photographer's shop window, and, pointing to a picture, asked—

"What would you call that in *Romanes*?" (Gypsy).

"Why, a *kushti-dikin rakli* (a good-looking girl), to be sure."

"*Keka, keka* (no, no), I don't mean that. What's our word for 'picture'?"

"*Dikamengri*."

"*Keka*, that's the word for a looking-glass."

"Well, what would *you* say?"

"*Stor-dui-graph*" (*Four*(4)-*two*(2)-graph, hence photograph).

The Romany tongue is plastic, and a Gypsy will playfully coin new words in this fashion. As a Gypsy once said, "There's always a way of saying a thing in *Romanes*, if you can find it out." Certain it is, if a Gypsy has no old word for a thing, he will not be long in coining a new one.

Entering the Spring Bank Cemetery together, my companion pointed out the grave of Yoki Shuri, the faithful consort of Ryley Boswell (or Boss), and upon the neat stone I read this inscription, "In memory of Shorensey Boss, who died Jan. 18, 1868, aged 65 years." From a bush planted on the grave I plucked a sweet white rose.

Further, I learned from my companion that Old Ryley's son Isaac, commonly called "Haggi," had died in Hull only a few years previously. Like his brother Newton, he too had visited Australia, and, returning to this country, had settled in Hull, and was daily seen in the streets with a grinding-barrow. A girl whom Haggi brought with him from Australia told me (this was a few years later) that when as a child she was naughty, Haggi would frighten her by saying, "If you're not good, Old Ryley will get you, and he'll *maw tut*" (kill you).

One summer, when holidaying with my family at the breezy Yorkshire coast-town of Bridlington, I heard that there were Romanies living in a house at a little inland town, and, cycling over the hills, I spent a pleasant hour in the home of a Gypsy, who in a sweet voice sang the following ballad:—

"There were seven Gypsies all in a row,
And they sang blithe and bonny, O!
They sang until at last they came
Unto the yellow castle's hall, O!

The yellow castle's lady, she came out,
And gave to them some siller, O!
She gave to them a far better thing,
'Twas the gold ring from her finger, O!

At ten o'clock o' night her lord came home,
Enquiring for his lady, O!
The waiting-maid gave this reply,
She's gone with the roving Gypsies, O!

Come saddle me my milk-white steed,
Come saddle for me my pony, O!
That I may go by the green-wood side,
Until I find my lady, O!

So all through the dark o' night he rode,
Until the next day's dawning, O!
He rode along the green-wood side,
And there he found his lady, O!

Last night you laid on a good feather bed,
Beside your own married lord, O!
To-night in the cold open fields you lie,
Along with the roving Gypsies, O!

What made you leave your home and your lands?
What made you leave your money, O!
What made you leave your own married lord,
To go with the roving Gypsies, O!

What cares I for my home and my lands,
What cares I for my money, O!
What cares I for my own married lord,
I'll go with the roving Gypsies, O!"

On leaving, I placed a silver coin in the singer's tawny palm, whereupon she sprang from her stool by the fire and gave me a resounding kiss on the cheek.

CHAPTER XIII

WITH THE YORKSHIRE GYPSIES

As I have said, Gypsies settled in houses now greatly outnumber their roving brethren. Hence it has come to pass that nearly every town in the land possesses a Bohemian quarter where you are met by dark faces and sidelong glances speaking of Gypsy blood. Nor can the student of Gypsy life and manners afford to neglect these haunts despite their dinginess, for as often as not they contain aged Gypsies whose memories are well worth ransacking for lore and legend, and in "working" these queer alleys, one has often picked up choice reminiscences of bygone Gypsy life.

One morning I was walking under the grey walls of Scarborough Castle, and, coming out upon the sparkling North Bay, I ran into the arms of a *mush-fakir* (umbrella-mender), who looked as if there rolled in his veins a blend of Scottish and Irish blood, but I was mistaken, for he told me he was Welsh and bore the name of Evans. Far-travelled, his peregrinations had ranged from Aberdeen to Penzance, and seldom have I met a man of his class so overflowing with varied knowledge. He asked me if I



HOUSE-DWELLING GYPSIES.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]

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knew William Street in Scarborough, but as a new-comer I admitted that I had not so much as heard of the locality, and made request for further information.

"I reckon William Street 'll just suit you," he declared. "It's full o' tinkers and grinders, Gypsies and sweeps, and the like."

"A regular Whitechapel," I suggested.

"Now you've hit it," said he laughingly.

I asked him where he was residing in that street.

"At the Model, to be sure, and if you ax for Long Ambrose, you'll find they all know me."

I further inquired of him as to the Gypsy inhabitants of that quarter, and he gave me a list of the "travellers" who had settled there. These I called upon leisurely during a holiday extending over three weeks. One day I would look up one or two of them, and a few days later I renewed my visitation by dropping in upon several others, and so on until this little gold-mine was exhausted.

From the sea-front it was a change scarcely Aladdin-like to find oneself in smoky William Street, a byway shut in by dingy walls, which in the deepening dusk took on an air of mystery. A little way down the street, I knocked at the door of Inji Morrison, but as there was no response I lifted the latch, and, putting my head inside the room, I spake aloud, "*Putsh man te av adrê*" (Ask me to come inside). A sound of shuffling feet was heard, with tripping steps in the rear, and an old crone tottered forward, along with her granddaughter, dark-eyed

and twenty-five. Following them into the kitchen, I saw the floor scattered with willow pegs in various stages of manufacture. The pair accorded me a genial welcome, though they scanned me curiously as if wondering what sort of Gypsy I might be. When I mentioned some black foreign *Romanitshels* whom I had seen, the old mother remarked—

“I shouldn’t like to *dik lendi* (see them); they would make me think of the *Beng*.”

Then, as the old lady was dull of hearing, her granddaughter (in an aside) said—

“You mustn’t mind, *rai*, what granny says; she’s getting old. As for the *Beng*, there ain’t no sich pusson, I don’t think. There’s ^{at}nothing bad comes from below. There’s the springs we drink from, and the dearie little flowers we love to gather. And there’s nothing but good comes from above; the blessed sunshine and the light o’ moon and the rain that falls—why, all of ’em’s good things, ain’t they? The badness is on’y what people makes.”

Now through the open door leading to a cramped backyard came a hairy terrier, followed by a small boy with saucy eyes and long, black curls falling upon the shoulders of his ill-fitting coat. A great-grandson from a few doors lower down was this quicksilver pixy, who sat himself at our feet and cuddled the terrier near a few red embers in the grate.

“Mend the fire, my gal,” said Old Inji. And when the wood blazed and lit up the room, granny

filled her pipe from shavings cut from a cake of black tobacco.

"I'll never go to Seamer Fair no more now my man's dead. 'Tain't likely as I could. 'Twouldn't be the same, would it?"

"Seamer Fair, when is that?"

"Why, next week. There'll be *dosta Roman-itshels odoi* (many Gypsies there) and music and dancing. Ay, and fighting too."

Then she fell to rambling about her former life on the road.

Another day I sat with Vashti Boswell in her cottage down one of the numerous yards branching out of William Street. Handing me a rude stool, the work of some Gypsy carpenter, she sat herself on the fender. On her forehead was a deep indentation which she said was made by a blow from a poker at the hand of a mad relative. In vivid words she described the occasion of that blow, and one pictured the desperate struggle between the two women, till Vashti, fainting from loss of blood, fell in a heap on to the floor, but not before Izaria, a stalwart fellow, attracted by his mother's screams, had rushed into the house and snatched the weapon from the mad woman's hand.

A little higher up the street lived this same son and Vashti's nephew, Joel Boswell, who were sent for, a neighbour's child acting as messenger. I have often noticed that Gypsies will call in their

kinsfolk who live near to share in the pleasure and excitement, likewise in the "grist," implied by a *rai*'s visit. Much to my surprise Vashti knew all about Gypsy Court at Lincoln, and little wonder when she presently told me that her husband was a half-brother of my old friend, Jumping Jack.

Talking of the past, Vashti declared that very few Gypsies in her day went to church for marriage.

"My man and me jumped the besom, we did. That's how we was married. Like many more, we didn't get *parson'd*, but we thought our old way just as binding as if we'd been to church. My man were a good 'un as long as he lived, and weren't that enough for the likes o' me?"

"Then you remember Jumping Jack?" I asked.

"*Åwa* (yes), and he could jump too. He once cleared the backs of three horses standing side by side, and I's seen him jump the common gate times and agen. When my husband was living, we used to travel Lincolnshire, and now lots of us are living in houses scattered all over the *tem*" (country).

At this juncture, Joel disappeared for a few moments, and on his return bore a large jug of foaming brown ale, which was his way of welcoming the *rai*, and pipes were soon in full blast.

It was from Joel's lips that I heard about Mordecai Boswell, who died at Retford many years ago. Mordecai was a fine-looking man, his hair falling in long curls. He wore a dark green coat with big pearl buttons and a broad collar, while his

low-crowned hat might well have been a family heirloom. He had a dancing booth at fairs, and would fiddle, while his sister Matilda danced and played the tambourine. Frampton Boswell used to join him at the St. Leger and other big races, and they didn't do badly with the dancing booth.

One day a *gawjo* was chatting with Mordecai, and the talk turned upon *hotshiwitshi* (hedgehog).

"I couldn't fancy eating that creature," said the *gawjo*. "It makes me feel queer to think of it."

"Look here," said Mordecai, "I'll bet you a half-crown that before many days are past you'll have had some."

The *gawjo* grinned and shrugged his shoulders. Time went on, and the *gawjo* one day came upon Mordecai and his family having dinner on the roadside.

"Won't you have a bite with us?" said Mordecai.

"What's that on the dish?" asked the *gawjo*.

"Duck," replied the Gypsy, with a grave face. The *gawjo* sat down and was soon enjoying what looked remarkably like a duck's leg. When the meal was over and pipes were brought out, Mordecai got a-talking.

"Well, my pal, where have you been since I saw you last, and how have you been faring? Has any Gypsy got you to swallow a bit o' *hotshiwitshi*?"

"No, not likely. Didn't I tell you that that nasty creature should never touch my lips?"

"Then you've done it to-day. You've had *hotshi*

for dinner, and you seemed to enjoy one of the legs finely. You smacked your lips over it anyway. Hand up that half-crown."

He did so, and, turning pale, walked away.

"I say, *rai*," remarked Izaria, "did you know there's some of the black Herrens (Hérons) stopping at Robin Hood's Bay, not far from here? I seen 'em at Scarborough a little while back, and I shouldn't wonder if some of 'em's at Seamer Fair next week."

Making a mental note of these two places, I resolved to visit them. Then, happening to mention the *mush-fakir* whom I had encountered near the Castle, Joel said, "I once had an uncle as was very fond of this here town, I mean Elisha Blewitt, as married Mordecai's sister Sybarina; my uncle was a *mush-fakir*, but he's been dead for years. As for that there man you spoke of, I believe there's a long-legged *gèro* (man) in the same line o' business living at the Model."

Next day in the same quarter I waylaid Fennix Smith in company with a Gypsy named Swales, who were about to set forth in a two-wheeled cart drawn by a thin-legged pony, their destination being Malton. On their way home they would call at "No Man's Land," where they expected to find some of their travelling friends drawing up for Seamer Fair. Between their legs I noticed a lurcher curled up, and, pointing to it, I said, "I see you mean to have some sport on the way."

“Yes, and we shan’t forget to bring you something, pass’n, if we has good luck.”

After the pony-cart had rattled out of the street, I turned into the yard of the Model, where several grinding-barrows stood under a lean-to, but I failed to recognize Long Ambrose’s property among them, and, entering the house, I learned that my *mush-fakir* might be expected home at any time. Walking up the street, I came upon a stalwart Gypsy woman standing at her open door. Her husband, I gathered, was a tinker, and not a prosperous one at that, judging by his wife’s tattered gown and woebegone air. During our talk about her relations who travelled Lincolnshire, two pretty little children continually tugged at her gown.

“If you go to Seamer Fair, *rai*, you’ll be sure to find some of my folks, the Smiths, along with the Herrens and Youngs.”

Just then I heard a man whistling, and round the corner appeared Long Ambrose pushing his barrow. In the yard of the Model we conversed, and on his referring to Gloucester, I asked if he knew any of the Carews, horse-dealers of that city.

“Oh yes, there was one of them sold a dyed horse to match a black carriage-*grai*, and a wery ‘fly’ cove he was, but he got found out, and had to do ‘time’ for that affair.” My *mush-fakir* seemed to have travelled everywhere.

Mindful of the intimation let fall by Izaria Boswell

that there were black Herons to be found at Robin Hood's Bay, I made my way thither afoot one brilliant July morning. A cool air from the sea tempered the sun's powerful rays, and it was good to inhale the sweetness of the summer meadows where the haymakers were busy. Overhead the bent-winged silvery gulls passed to and fro, and among the wayside bushes yellow-hammers trilled their song which in childhood we translated by the words, "a little bit of bread and no cheese."

Perched on the top of a lofty cliff overlooking the North Sea, the village of Robin Hood's Bay seems almost to overhang a precipice, and on stormy nights the wind roaring up the cliff flings the salt spray far inland. The whole of the coast hereabouts is a delicious panorama of rock-bound bays and coves.

On arriving at the village I had no difficulty in locating my Gypsies. A fisherman, sun-tanned and jovial, pointed a stubby finger towards a grassy plot whereon stood three caravans, and it was with a thrill of pleasure that I drew near. Yes, there on the short turf sat one-armed Josh and Nettie, his wife. Our greetings were hearty, and as we talked, up came one of the Youngs.

"You are just the man I want to see, *rashai*," and, taking out a crumpled newspaper, he said, "There's something in here about stopping the Gypsies from camping at Scarborough."

After a hunt through the paper, I came upon a

report of a meeting of the wiseacres of the town, and read their speeches about the "nuisances" said to be created by the Gypsies.

"But there ain't any Gypsies there now *we's* come away," said Young. "The people stopping there are only poor *didakais* (half-breeds) and *mumpari*. We don't call *them* Gypsies."

The speaker was one of the purest-bred English Gypsies I have ever met.

Pure Gypsies draw a marked line between dirty, low-class van-dwellers and themselves; but unfortunately the world at large makes no such distinction, immensely to the detriment of the true *Romanitshel*.

East Yorkshire is a favourite country with the Herons and Youngs. Both Josh and Nettie love it well, as did also some of their forelders. It was at Robin Hood's Bay that Nettie's Aunt Whipney died long years ago. I well remember a little tale about this old Gypsy. Tinker Ned, her husband, had "found" a *kani* (hen) for the pot. It was a small one, and Whipney cooked it. When the tinker came home at a later hour than he had promised, he asked—

"Where's that *kani*? Have you cooked it?"

His wife answered by putting two fingers into her mouth, meaning, that she had consumed the little fowl. Thereupon Tinker Ned picked up a loose tent rod and gave her a good thrashing.

Close by sat Nettie's daughter-in-law, Isabel, and her children, bonny bairns, tumbled happily on the grass. As I looked at these Gypsies, all of them

pictures of blooming health—clear-eyed, clean-limbed, bare-headed in sun and breeze—I reflected not without sadness on the fact that the tendency of modern legislation is to curtail and render more difficult the free, roving life of these children of Nature.

It was now late in the afternoon, and over tea we talked of other times and old Gypsy ways. Nettie told of her own mischievous tricks when she was a child, how she used to hide her mammy's pipe in a tuft of grass near the tent, and then watch her hunt up and down for it; her sister Linda and she would have a good laugh to themselves over the trick, and then what tales their old mother would tell them by the fire o' nights. One of these stories related to a horse belonging to some Irish Gypsies, the O'Neils.

He was an aged animal and a favourite of the family. One day he fell down and broke his back. Quite still he lay, and, taking him for dead, they removed his skin, but in the morning he came and kicked at the *vâdo*. He was a sight awful to behold. Now it happened that near at hand lay a pile of sheepskins, so they hurriedly clapped some of these on the poor horse and bound them round and round with willow withies. In a little while the animal recovered, and the O'Neils used to clip a crop of wool off him every year. And since the willow sticks took root and grew, the Gypsies were able to cut materials sufficient to make many baskets.

Folk-stories of this character are classified by lorists as "lying tales," and in a subsequent chapter

I shall give a sheaf of such stories familiar to all our Boswells and Herons, wherever you may light upon them.

It was Nettie's daughter-in-law who, after listening to a ghost tale from me, protested—

"*Mulos* (ghosts)—I'll tell you what I thinks about 'em. Folks who die and go to the good place won't never want to leave it, and as for people what go to the bad place, I reckons they'll have to stop there. 'Tain't likely they'll ever have a chance to come back."

Looking up the footpath leading to the camp, I saw Isabel's little boy dragging a dead bough behind him. Said Josh, waving his stump of an arm towards the approaching child—

"The worst thing we Gypsies does nowadays is to pick up a dead stick or two for the fire, and if we goes into a *wesh* (wood) for a little *shushi* (rabbit) for the pot, well, I reckon there's plenty left for them as has a deal too many. If we sets a snare, it ain't so cruel as the keeper's teathy traps, and the lord and lady as employs the keeper talks in the Town Hall agen cruelty to animals—so I hear. Oh dear, it makes me larf!"

As I turned to take a farewell look at the group, I saw the Gypsies stretched at full length, puffing their pipes, while away beyond them lay the deep blue sea, and the rugged coast trending north and south in exquisite bays. It was a sight to cherish in the memory.

A cool rain in the early hours had given place to a hot July morning, as I entered the village of Seamer already astir with its horse-fair. Making my way between knots of colts and droves of ponies at whose heels Gypsy boys were waving pink glazed calico flags, I went to where one of the North-Country Smiths stood gesticulating before a group of prospective buyers of colts, and discovered in him Elias Petulengro's son, Vanlo, whom I had known at Lincoln. Presently he walked across to me and held out a hand of friendship. All around us were Yorkshire travelling folk, and while chatting with Vanlo I witnessed a curious thing. Three policemen stood talking together, and one of them had his hands behind his back. A Gypsy, sidling up, slipped a half-crown into this policeman's hand. I saw his fingers close over the coin, yet he never by the slightest sign betrayed this act of the Gypsy, which passed unobserved by the other constables. Petulengro, who witnessed it, explained that this sort of thing is not uncommon. It obtains little privileges. "The *musgro*" (policeman), said he, "will turn a blind eye to that Gypsy's fire on some wayside to-night."

Strolling through the fair, I spied old Clara Smith smoking a black clay under a stone wall, and by her side sat her daughter Tiena and one of her male relations, whom I had once met on a bleak fell in North-West Yorkshire. It was he who told me the following tale as he sat making pegs among the ling :—



PHOTO - FRED SHAW.

A GYPSY LAD.



“When I was a boy, I was taking *puvengris* (potatoes) from a field, and I looked up, and there stood a tall man staring at me over the hedge.

“‘You come along with me,’ he shouted, and, taking him for a policeman in plain clothes, I obeyed, and went with him to a big building which I thought was the Sessions House. There were many people inside, and a gentleman was talking to them. At last he looked hard at me, and said, ‘Thou art the man.’

“So I jumped up and said, ‘Yes, I know I am, but I didn’t mean to do it. It was my uncle as made me go. I’ll never steal potatoes no more.’ And because I would keep on talking like a Philadelphia lawyer, they turned me out without passing sentence on me. Next day I was walking with my uncle, and the tall man as took me off to the place, passed by. ‘That’s the policeman as arrested me,’ says I.

“‘Why, you silly boy,’ said my uncle, ‘that there man is the evangelist, and he took you to his chapel, he did.’”

CHAPTER XIV

A NIGHT WITH THE GYPSIES—THE SWEEP OF LYNN—LONDON GYPSIES—ON EPSOM DOWNS

“It ain’t fit to turn a dog out o’ doors, that it ain’t, so you’d better make up your mind to stop all night.”

Saying this, Gypsy Ladin closed the porch door, but not without difficulty, for a gale was battering upon the wayside bungalow. Half an hour ago, as I hurried along the willow-fringed “ramper” on my way to see this old Romany pal, black rain-clouds, bulging low over the fenland wapentake, had foretold an approaching storm; and now with the descent of the May night the tempest had burst in full fury upon the land. Torrential rain, swift swelling rushes of wind, and brilliant flashes of lightning made me glad to be housed with my friend in his fire-lit room.

Hidden by a dense hedge from the highway, this Gypsy abode stood back amid a cluster of apple trees, and a daylight view of the place would have revealed to you an entirely nondescript habitation, with here a home-made porch, and there a creeper-grown extension sheltering a green caravan in which Ladin and his wife Juli have travelled many a mile over the smooth causeways of the far-reaching flats.

Let me picture for you the tiny apartment where we now sat happily blowing clouds of tobacco smoke. Over the wide fireplace, which occupied one side of the room, rose a high mantelpiece surrounded by coloured prints of Derby winners, divided one from another by glistening horse-bits and brass-bound whips. Opposite the fireplace a small casement looked out upon a bulb-garden aglow by day with hyacinths, tulips, and narcissi—a common sight in the Fens. The side walls were adorned with portraits of Gypsy relatives deceased and living, and the brazen ornaments on parts of a van-horse's harness gleamed in the rays of the pendant lamp. Before the fire sat my friend and his wife, a tall, striking woman of the old-fashioned Draper clan, and along with us were two youthful sons of the house, Rinki and Zegul, smart, quick-eyed fellows, who occupied a home-made bench opposite my seat of honour in the chimney corner. At our feet lay a dark lurcher, a type of dog whose peculiar qualities are well appreciated by Gypsies.

I have already spoken of my friend as "Gypsy" Ladin, but his ruddy complexion and grey eyes are scarcely suggestive of the pure Romany. About the good "black blood" of his wife, however, there can be no manner of doubt. Probably my friend would agree with the roving *gawjo*, who, having married a pure Gypsy, declared that the mingling of gentile and Romany crafts was a desirable blending of qualities. Did not Lазzy Smith, renowned in Gypsydom, once say—

"Ain't it in the Bible that God's people should multiply and be as one? It ain't no sort o' use at all a-goin' agen the dear blessed Lord's words. Why, a cross is good, even if it be only in wheat, ain't it, now?"

Belonging to East Anglia, Ladin's forelders have mingled a good deal with the Herons who formerly travelled the counties bordering upon the North Sea. Himself akin to the Chilcots and Smiths, Ladin has inherited not a few traditions of these families.

"Do you remember Yoki Shuri Smith?" I asked.

"You mean Old Ryley's wife? Ay, I mind her well, but Ryley I don't remember. Shuri—Ladin shivered as he uttered the name—was looked upon as a *tshovihawni* (witch) by our folks. We allus thought it unlucky to meet her on the road of a morning. I've known my folks turn back, saying, 'It ain't no use going out to-day.'"

After a discussion of Shuri's "powers," I ventured upon a tale of my own experience of a witch who lived in a parish of which I was formerly curate-in-charge.

About a fortnight after my arrival at the Rectory, our aged gardener took me into his confidence.

"Excuse me askin' if you've seen Old Betty what lives agin the well at the bottom of the lane? You must mind you don't never get across wi' that woman, or she'll sartinly mek things awk'ard for you."

The man's meaning was that Betty had "peculiar powers." A widow of sixty or more, she attended

no place of worship, and rarely covered her grey head with anything more than a shawl. Besides her allowance from the parish, she managed to make a little money by selling ointments for wounds and sores, and many a cure has been wrought by means of her home-made compounds. My first meeting with her was on the Feast of St. Thomas, called in those parts "Mumping Day." At my door stood Old Betty asking for a bit of silver, and a few yards behind her came several other widows. Hesitatingly I stood just over the threshold, when suddenly, before I could step aside, a lot of soft snow slid from the house-roof with a splash upon my bare head, while Old Betty and her companions laughed loud and long. The village gossips duly spread it abroad that Betty had, by her "peculiar powers," brought down the snow upon the parson's head. Anyway, I resolved for the future to be more prompt in the exercise of that unfailing charm against Betty's witchcraft—a silver shilling.

"Did you ever see my Aunt Sarah at Blackpool?" said Juli.

"Yes, I once had tea in her tent on the South Shore. Did she and her *rom* (husband), Edward, ever travel on this side of England?"

"Sartinly, they did. Ned's daddy, Tyso, lies buried in your country. Poor old man, many's the time I've heard the tale about him and the shepherd boy."

“What was that?”

“Well, Tyso was once *hatshin* (camping) on a Norfolk common and got a-talking with a boy tending sheep. Says the boy to Tyso—

“‘I can tell you where there’s a buried box full o’ money.’

“‘Show me the place,’ says Tyso.

“The boy took him to a little low, green hill, and then they fetches a spade and digs into it. Sure enough they bared the lid of an old iron chest with a ring on top, and both of ’em tugged hard at the ring, but the box wouldn’t budge an inch. Just then Tyso swore, and the ring slipped outen their hands, and down went the box and they never see’d it no more.”

“One time the Herrens (Hérons) used to come about here a good deal. There was handsome William, a wery notified man he were. Then there was Old Niabai and Crowy. Their son Isaac had a boy born at Lynn close by here—that was Îza. You’ll know him sure-ly. I’ve often met Ike’s half-brother Manful in Lynn. I can see him now, a little doubled-up old man. I ’spects you’s heard tell of Manful’s diamond? One day in a public, he catch’d sight of something shining among the sand—they sanded the slab floors in them days—and, whatever the thing was, it shone like a bit of cut-glass, and at first he thought it wasn’t worth stooping for, but when the taproom was empty he picked it up, and

dawdi! if it wasn't a diamond as big as a cobnut. So away he takes it to a pawnbroker's shop, and the head man told him it were worth hundreds of pounds. My dear old dad once saw it with his own eyes."

While the black trees shuddered outside in the tempest, Ladin next told a story I shall never forget.

"When my uncle, Alfred Herren, and his wife Becky was a-travelling in Shropshire, they draw'd their wagon one night into a by-lane—so they thought—just outside the village, but daylight show'd 'em it were a gentleman's drive leading up to a red mansion among the trees. Did my uncle pull out when he found he'd made a mistake? No, for a wery good reason he stopped where he was. His missis had been took ill in the night, and a little gell were born. The doctor gave no hopes at all for the wife, and just when things looked blackest, a groom on horseback came up from the mansion, and, slamming on the wagon-side with his whipstock, shouted—

"'Clear out of here, you rascally Gypsies, afore my master sees you.'

"Uncle Alfred put his head outen the door, and said—

"'Stop it, my man. There's a woman a-dying in here. I'd take it kind of you to go to the big house yonder and ask the good lady to come and pray by a dying Gypsy.'

"Off goes the groom with the message, and soon the squire's lady come along carrying a basket of good things, and did all she could for Becky, but the poor thing died. After that the parson came to christen the baby.

" 'What name?' he asks.

" 'Flower o' May,' says my uncle. The wagon stood under a may-tree, and the flowers were dropping on the grass like snow. Now, the squire and his lady come along. Says he—

" 'The Almighty has never given us the blessing of a child, so we would like to adopt this little girl of yours and bring her up as our own. Here' (holding up a bag) 'are one hundred sovereigns. Take them, my good man, and let us have the baby.'

" 'Nay,' says my uncle, 'you may keep your bag of gold. I can't never part wi' my little gell.'

"Years went by, and at last my uncle fell ill and died. Then my own parents took care of the little gell, and they changed her name to Rodi, for they couldn't abide to hear the name Flower o' May no more; it reminded 'em too sadly of them as had gone."

On arising from my couch next morning, it was a pleasure to find that the air was moderately quiet, and patches of blue were showing between the rolling clouds. Breakfast over, my friends showed me round their garden gay with flowering bulbs. Gypsy-like, they had numerous pets—a pair of long-eared owls,

a jackdaw, a goldfinch, some dainty bantams, and two or three pheasants in a wired poultry-run. Now the Gypsies came as far as the highway to see me off. Tender leaves and twigs strewed the road, as I mounted my bicycle, and after pedalling through several villages, the roofs of King's Lynn began to appear ahead. A turn in the road at last brought me to a bridge spanning the broad river Ouse discoloured by flood-water. In a yard of the tavern just across the river, the chimneys of several Gypsy vans were to be seen. I therefore dismounted to make inquiries. Sunning himself on a bench outside the inn, sat a tall Gypsy man emptying a mug of Norfolk ale.

"*Sâ shan, baw?*" (How do, mate?) said I, sitting down beside him. He turned out to be one of the Kilthorpes, and his pals in the yard were Coopers from London.

An hour or two later, as I was loitering at a street corner in Lynn, I observed not far away a two-wheeled hooded cart drawn by a tired horse. From under a dark archway they emerged, and, 'coming' into the light, I noticed an old woman under the hood smoking a pipe, and just then, from behind the cart stepped a sweep, who disappeared into a coal-yard, carrying a sack in his hand. Following him, I heard him say—

"Half a hundred-weight, missis." A burly woman, having weighed out the coal, poured it into the sack

—a bottomless receptacle—and the black lumps were scattered about the floor.

“*Muk man peser*” (Let me pay), said I, from behind the sweep. Whereupon the grimy old fellow looked round with an amazed stare.

“*Pariko tuti, rai*” (Thank you, sir), he stammered out, and, producing a piece of string, he tied the sack bottom securely, and the two of us picked up the littered coal.

“Where are you living?” I asked.

“*Pawdel the pâni*” (Across the water) “in West Lynn. We’ve been away for three months, and we’re going round to our house now. Come across to-night. Anybody will tell you where Old Stivven lives.”

When the yellow street-lamps were twinkling in the dusk, I groped my way down a long dark passage, and at the foot of a flight of slippery wet steps, found a black coble moored. For ten minutes or so I waited till a man in a jersey appeared and rowed me across the broad, rolling Ouse. At the “White Swan” inn I made inquiry for my sweep, and was given an address, and discovered a sweep, but, alas, he wasn’t my man at all, and I began to think Old Stephen had tricked me. But now I was given another address, where I found my man and his wife in their living-room, amid a spread of blankets and bedding airing in front of a bright fire. For a while we talked, and then at the sweep’s suggestion we moved across to the “White Swan.”

Stephen had formerly travelled with Barney Mace, an uncle of Jem, the world-famed pugilist, who had a boxing booth which he took to country fairs up and down the land, and in order to *tâder* the *gawjê* (draw the gentiles), Stephen and Poley (Barney's son) would engage in a few rounds just outside the booth.

The sweep had known Old Ōseri Gray, commonly called "Sore-eyed Horsery," who died some years ago at King's Lynn. He was a renowned Gypsy fiddler. If he heard a band play a tune, he would go home and reproduce the air on his violin, putting in such variations, grace-notes, shakes, and runs, that none of his fellows could compare with him.

Among the sweep's reminiscences was a curious story about an eccentric Gypsy who had a fancy for carrying his coffin in his travelling van. The man had a daughter, a grown woman, who went about with him, his wife having died some years before. One afternoon while she was away with her basket in the village, her father took out the coffin and was busy repainting it when a thunderstorm descended. The Gypsy took shelter in his *vâdo*, which was drawn up near an elm tree on a bit of a common. Picture the grief and dismay of his daughter on returning to find her father a corpse, for a flash of lightning had struck the tree and the van and killed the old Romany. On the day of the Gypsy's funeral, the vicar of the parish had the flag flying half-mast high

on the church tower, which everybody said was a kindly feeling to show for one who was only a wandering Gypsy.

On asking my sweep about the house-dwelling Gypsies of Lynn, he directed me to the abode of the aged widow of Louis Boss (son of the famous Ryley Boswell or Boss), and a charming reception she gave me in her spotless cottage in a retired court. The sweep had told me of this old lady's liking for snuff, and a visit to a *tuvalo budika* (tobacco shop) enabled me to give her a little pleasure. By the fireside she refilled her shiny metal box, and, having offered me a trial of the pungent dust, herself took deep, loving pinches, with the air of a connoisseur. Indeed, the snuff cemented our friendship forthwith. Here I am reminded of a story telling how Dr. Manning (of the Religious Tract Society) once employed snuff in a very different fashion. When visiting Granada in Spain, he was beset by a begging crew of swarthy men, women, and children, and as he stood in the middle of the clamouring horde, he took out his snuff-box. Immediately all the Gypsies wanted a pinch. He obliged them, so long as the snuff lasted, taking care to keep a tight hold of his silver box. Soon the Gypsies were all sneezing and laughing immoderately, and amid the commotion the good doctor managed to make his escape.

The road from King's Lynn to East Dereham led me through villages astir with Whitsuntide festivities. At one point I turned down a by-lane,

and, resting at the foot of a tree within view of Borrow's birthplace at Dumpling Green, I observed a party of donkey-folk trudging along with their animals towards Dereham. Local mumpers were these people, a draggle-tailed lot, and I could not help reflecting upon the difference between the poor wanderers who now pass for Gypsies and the Petulengros and Herons of Borrow's time.

In the church of East Dereham, one's fancy pictured the boy Borrow in the corner of a pew fixing his eyes upon the dignified rector and parish clerk "from whose lips would roll many a portentous word descriptive of the wondrous works of the Most High."

It was like living in *Lavengro* to wander about the alleys and lanes of old Norwich and through the ling and fern on breezy Mousehold above the town. Up there amid the camping sites and the fighting-pits, it was not without sadness that I read on a notice-board—"No Gypsy, squatter, or vagrant shall frequent, or resort to, or remain upon the Heath." O shades of Jasper Petulengro and Tawno Chikno, changed indeed are the times since the days when ye loved and fought and trafficked within the precincts of beautiful old Norwich!

Concerning my trip by boat from Yarmouth to London, which was entirely lacking in Gypsy interest, nothing need be said here.

London is in parts strongly tintured with Gypsy

blood. Let anyone walk along the streets which have been built upon the sites of the old metropolitan Gypsyries, and he will surely see dark faces and black eyes telling how the Gypsies still cling to these localities. All around Latimer Road Station, which stands upon the Potteries, Gypsies are to be found living in narrow courts and dingy lanes.

On my way to Epsom on the eve of the Derby, I passed a few happy moments with my aged pal, Robert Petulengro, in whose back room at Notting Hill I have often been regaled with racy stories and touching reminiscences of old-time Romany life. There is something suggestive of the cleric in Bob's demeanour, and a stranger would never suspect that my placid-looking friend had led a wild, roving life. It is when he loses himself in a tale that his mild ministerial air gives place to a vivacity characteristically Gypsy.

To the Gypsyry on the Potteries came nomads named Heron and Leatherlund in the year 1854. (Some of their descendants still reside at the backs of the mews in Notting Hill.) They were the survivors of a sad disaster which in the previous year had befallen a party of hop-pickers at Hadlow in Kent. Through the kindness of a Gypsy woman who was "saved from the flood," I am able to reprint a portion of an old tract giving the Rev. R. Shindler's version of "The Medway Disaster."

"In Kent you may still be told of a sad

catastrophe which befel a party of hop-pickers, in the year 1853, as they were returning to their temporary habitations after a day's work. The scene of the alarming event was in the parish of Hadlow, near Tunbridge, Kent. It is well known that thousands of poor people flock down into Kent for the hopping. Some of these are Gypsies; some may be described as house-cart people, who travel from place to place for the greater part of the year, selling their wares—brushes and brooms, tin-ware, earthen-ware, and such-like; but by far the larger part emerge from the lanes and alleys and courts of London. To the last especially, but to the others also, the hopping proves, when the weather is fine and the hops good, a pleasant recreation as well as a profitable employment. A number of people of Gypsy character and habits were employed by a farmer who resided in the parish of Tudely, and who had hop gardens also in Hadlow parish. It is a good rule among the hop-farmers, that when their gardens are any considerable distance from the homes of the natives or the encampments of the strangers, the pickers should be conveyed in wagons to and from the gardens. In this case, the river Medway had to be crossed in going to and from the gardens, and the only means of crossing was a wooden bridge of considerable span, and high above the current. The bridge was considered dangerous, especially for spirited horses, who were alarmed at the noise

made by their own feet. The bridge was rendered even more dangerous by reason of the rather frail open wooden rails which flanked it right and left.

"On the morning of the day on which the catastrophe occurred, several parties passed over the bridge in safety, and in the evening parties of natives, or 'home-dwellers,' had returned without any mishap; but as a party of Gypsies and such-like were being conveyed back, the horses suddenly took fright, ran the wagon against the side of the bridge, which gave way, and wagon, horses, and people were precipitated into the strong current below, and no less than thirty were drowned. I was then pastor in a neighbouring parish, and had taken a deep interest in the religious condition of the hop-pickers, preaching in fields and stackyards and elsewhere near their encampments, and distributing tracts and New Testaments. The sad event mentioned above stirred my heart a great deal, and I felt impelled to write a short tract. The thirty hop-pickers were buried in Hadlow church-yard in a common grave, the spot being marked by a monument recording the names of those who perished in the waters of the Medway."

There are in Battersea numerous "yards" under railway arches, where living-vans of "travellers" used to be seen all the year round. Very much diluted is the Gypsy blood to be found nowadays in these "yards." It is these degenerates, mostly

Londoners bred and born, who at times give so much trouble to the local authorities in Surrey.

Upon Hampstead Heath, and at Wormwood Scrubbs, a sprinkling of Gypsy faces may be seen among the show-folk on a Bank Holiday, and at Edmonton, Mitcham, and near Southend-on-Sea, I have met Gypsies all the year round.

If the Yorkshireman goes to see the St. Leger because he has an instinctive love of horse-flesh, the Cockney resorts to Epsom Downs on the Derby Day to smell the scent of green turf and to take part in the most stupendous picnic in the world.

Not merely to see a crowd of nearly a million human beings, but to sample Epsom's Gypsies, was the object of my visit to the Downs one unforgettable June day. London's unyielding pavements mean for me, after a day or two of them, an unpleasant foot-soreness, hence it was a relief to step forth upon the springy sward outside the Downs Station. Like children let loose from school, my fellow-travellers from town laughed and joked, whistled and sang, as briskly they moved towards the course.

It was among the gorse bushes on the sunlit hill-top that I caught my first glimpse of the Gypsies, and to one acquainted with the swart *Romanitshels* of East Anglia and the Northern Counties, the folk of the ramshackle carts and tiny tents were distinctly disappointing. Ruddy, fair-haired, and poorly-clad, were many of them; what a falling off

from the horde of dark Gypsies assembled at some of our North-Country fairs!

While I was chatting with a metropolitan policeman, up came a tall Gypsy girl vending what purported to be tiny squares of cedar wood, though the specimen I purchased for threepence smelled a good deal more like the innermost layer of the red bark abounding in the strips of pine forest around Tunbridge Wells. When I inquired of the damsel as to what Gypsies were present on the Downs, she replied, with a low laugh, "You's never got to go far in these parts for to catch an Ayre. My dad's an Ayre, but my *dai* (mother) was a Stevens. Over there" (pointing to a town of Gypsy caravans and a country fair combined opposite the Grand Stand) "you'll find some of the Matthews, Penfolds, and maybe a few of the Bucklands."

Crossing the course, I made my way to the part of the Downs indicated by Cinderella Ayre, and though I rubbed shoulders with a good many sunburnt travellers in corduroys, and show-women in gowns of red and green, the first real Gypsy it was my good fortune to meet was Davy Lee, the ancient vagabond who "planted" the *dukerin-mokto* (fortune-telling box) upon George Smith of Coalville. Although nearly blind, Davy managed to dodge in and out of the crowd, and, taking me up to his wagon, found time to chat about his father, the renowned Zacky Lee.

"My daddy was stopping one night in a field, and before going to bed, he looked out and there



ON THE RACECOURSE.

Photo, Valentine.

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was his white donkey—leastways so he fancied. It was roaming about, and he set off to catch and tether it, so as he shouldn't lose it. But do whatever he would, he could never get up to the animal. The nearer he tried to come at it, the further off it allus was, till at last he know'd that what he'd been chasing all night was not his donkey at all, but the Devil."

Lounging on the grass, I noticed that the great event of the afternoon had arrived. Sleek, lean horses cantered along the course and passed out of sight. Amid a confused hubbub of voices, several moments went by. Now the glasses were levelled, and a profound silence settled on the crowd. All eyes were turned upon a little knot of horses appearing round Tattenham Corner. Then the sound of many voices swelled into a roar and died down again when the numbers went up.

Prominent at these races in days gone by was Matthias Cooper, a Gypsy to whom the late King Edward, when Prince of Wales, would toss a golden sovereign. A well-known figure was Matty, attired in white hat, yellow waistcoat, black cut-away coat, and white trousers. Hovering about this old Gypsy was an air of the Courts and the Wilderness, for had he not mingled with royalty nearly all his life, this old "Windsor Froggie"? It was from him that Charles G. Leland obtained most of the materials that went to make his work entitled *The English Gipsies and their Language*. Matty is now no more, but his

sons, Anselo and Wacker, still attend the Epsom races year by year.

The great carnival was at last subsiding when I found myself in the tent of Anselo Cooper and his wife, with whom I took tea. I am not likely to forget my ride from the course to Epsom Town. As the Coopers were not leaving till the end of the week, they begged a lift for me from some friends of theirs who were going to the town. Our "carriage," a two-wheeled affair, was drawn by a gaunt, long-legged horse, and along with some strange dark Gypsies I sat upon a pile of smoky tent-covers. We sped along the Down-land in a fashion which rocked us terribly. The very policemen laughed as we went by, but we reached the town in safety.

CHAPTER XV

TINKERS AND GRINDERS

A PLAGUE of an incline to joints stiffened by age, the Steep Hill at Lincoln is for me aureoled by all the fair colours of youth. Have I not more than once rent my nether garments in gliding down the adjacent hand-rail? Likewise in the time of snow have I not, defiant of police-notices, made slides where the gradient is sharpest?

Now it happened one day that under the shadow of the ancient, timbered houses just below the crown of the hill there stood at his workshop on wheels a Gypsy tinker whose wizened figure and general air of queerness would have charmed a Teniers, and I, a town boy with no small capacity for prying, hovered at his elbow, studying his operations. Suz-z-z-z-z went the tinker's wheel, as the sparks scattered in a rosy shower from the edge of a deftly handled blade. Then of a sudden something happened, causing me to jump as one who had been shot. There was a dull thud of a falling body, followed immediately by a shrill cry issuing from the throat of a sprawling pedlar—

“Stop my leg, stop my leg!”

A glance at the poor fellow revealed the whole story. His wooden leg, having become detached from its moorings, was rolling down the paved incline. Several persons were passing at the time, and more than one made a dash to recover the defaulting limb, but, youth's suppleness favouring me, I managed to capture the elusive treasure, and up the hill I bore it in triumph. With admirable agility the tinker re-attached the limb, and the pedlar went on his way rejoicing.

"Gimme yer knife, boy," said the tinker.

I had one resembling a saw, which he whisked from my hand and duly restored with a nice edge. He then resumed his work as though nothing worthy of remark had happened to stay the song of his wheel.

A craft of hoary antiquity is that of the nomad metal-worker. An Austrian ecclesiastic, in the year 1200, describes the "calderari," or tinkers, of that time: "They have no home or country. Everywhere they are found alike. They travel through the world abusing mankind with their knavery."

Four hundred years later, an Italian writer gives an account of the tinker who enchants the knives of the peasants by magnetizing them so as to pick up needles, and for this he accepts payment in the shape of a fowl or a pie. To this day in Eastern Europe, the smith, usually a Gypsy, is regarded as a semi-conjurer who has dealings with the Devil.

In Scotland you will find numberless "Greenies,

crinks, and tinklers" who roam in primitive Gypsy fashion, with donkeys, ramshackle carts, tents, and a tinker's equipment. If you have dropped into the shepherd's cottage in the heathery glen, or the lone farmhouse on the Lowland fell, you will have noticed the horn spoons and ladles, or the rude smoothing-irons. These are the handiwork of the tinklers of a bygone generation.

Two or three generations ago most of our English Gypsies were wandering tinkers carrying their outfits on their backs.

For my own part, I have everywhere found the caste of tinkers a cheerful, happy-go-lucky fellowship, and in talks with them I have observed that they generally know a few Gypsy words, even when it is clear that they do not belong to the dark race.

Shakespeare's Prince Hal, in *Henry iv.* (First Part, Act 2, Scene 4), is made to say, "I can drink with any tinker in his own language." This language, or jargon, known as *Shelta*,¹ has been the subject of much learned writing.

My first lesson in Shelta was taken near the Shire Bridge, where the Great North Road, approaching Newark-on-Trent from the south, quits Lincolnshire

¹ "Shelta is a secret language of great antiquity . . . in Irish MSS. we have mentions and records of it under various names . . . though now confined to tinkers, its knowledge was once possessed by Irish poets and scholars, who, probably, were its original framers" (Professor Kuno Meyer).

"The language of the tinkers is a dialect or jargon exclusively of Celtic origin, though, like one of their own stolen asses, it is so docked and disguised as to be scarcely recognizable. . . . A large number of

for the county of Nottingham. A favourite halting-place is this for wayfaring folk of all sorts. Seated on Mother Earth's green carpet, a tinker and his wife were taking tea, and at their invitation I sat beside them for a chat. Presently I showed two bright new pennies to the tinker, saying—

"If you'll tell me what these are in *Shelta*, they're yours."

In a moment he replied, "*Od nyok*" (two heads), and I handed over the coins. With a comic gesture he queried—

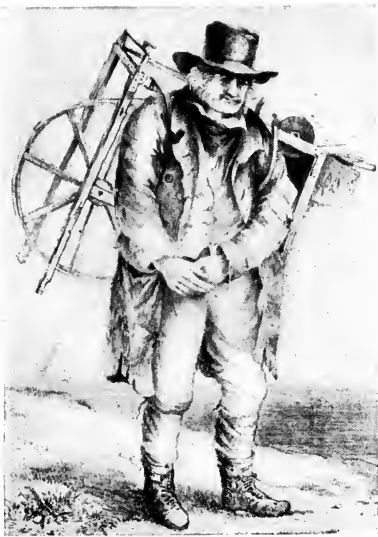
"Yer wouldn't like to larn a bit more o' thet langwidge, would yer?"

"Rat-tat-tat" went the old brass knocker one morning at the side-door of my house, and on being informed that a tinker was inquiring for me, I hastened to see what manner of man he was. Before me stood a battered specimen of the Romany of the roads, and with a view to testing his depth, I asked—

"Do you ever *dik* any *Romanitshels* on the *drom*?" (see any Gypsies on the road).

"You 'ave me there, mister," said he. "Upon my soul, I dunno what you're talkin' about."

Shelta words are formed by transposing the principal letters of the Gaelic word. This species of back-slang is, of course, purely phonetic, differing in this respect from the more artificial letter-reversing back-slang of costers and cabmen. . . . It is indeed strange that the existence of a tongue so ancient and widespread as *Shelta* should have remained entirely unsuspected until Mr. Leland, with whom the undivided honour of this discovery rests, first made it public in the pages of *Macmillan's Magazine*" (Dr. John Sampson).



A TINKER OF OLDEN TIMES.

By permission of Mrs. Johnson.]



A WELSH GYPSY TINKER.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]

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The man's face was a study in innocence.

"You know right enough what I'm saying," I continued in Romany.

My man could endure it no longer, and, exploding with mirth, he turned and shouted to his brother, who stood near a grinding-barrow on the road.

"*Av akai*, Bill, 'ere's a *rashai rokerin Romanes* as fast as we can" (Come here, Bill, here's a parson talking Gypsy). "Bring that *shushi* (rabbit) out o' the *guno*" (sack).

With unaffected goodwill, the two Gypsies insisted on my accepting the rabbit as a token of friendship. This I did gladly, asking no questions as to how they had come by a newly-killed rabbit. After grinding my garden axe, they both set off whistling down the road.

One day a Gypsy tinker, whom I had met a few times, took me aside, saying—

"My sister lives in the next street" (he told me the number). "She has a pony, a poor, scraggy thing, which she wants to get rid of badly. Go you and say to her—

"'I hear you have a nice little cob to sell.' And when she brings it round for you to look at, say—

"'Bless my soul, do you think I'd buy a hoppy *grai* like *dova*?' " (a lame horse like that).

Presently, at that sister's threshold, I waited for the pony to be brought round, which on arriving proved to be a miserable-looking animal indeed. The

woman looked first at me, then at the pony, which limped badly, while its bones showed through its skin.

Said I, "Well, really, I didn't expect to see quite such a *wafodu kova*" (wretched thing).

Readily entering into the joke, she laughed heartily. She had taken me for a *dinelo gawjo* (gentile simpleton), and to her astonishment I had turned out to be a Gypsy of a higher sort.

At one time I used to have frequent visits from a travelling tinker, and when his grinding-barrow was standing in my yard, I would chat with him while he was doing some little job. He was an interesting fellow who had seen something of the world. He had a remarkable knowledge of the medicinal properties of wild herbs, and would spend hours by the chalk stream in our valley, grubbing up liverwort of which he would make decoctions. One morning he was in the tale-telling mood.

"It was this very barrer what you're looking at now. You notice there's lots of bits of brass nailed on it for to catch the sunshine. I likes my barrer to look cheerful. Well, there was a fellow came to me with summut wrapped up in brown paper, a flat thing it was, and he says, 'I want you to buy this here off me.' Says I, 'Let's have a look at it,' and when he opened it out, it was a fine bit of copper-plate with summut engraved on it. I asked him what the engraving was about, for you know I can't read. He says, 'It's an architex business plate, that's

all, and you can have it for a shilling.' So I bought it and nailed it on to my barrer among the other bits of brass and things. Well, happens that a parson — was a-talking to me one day, and I noticed his eye lighted on this here copper-plate. Says he, looking wery serious, 'I'm afraid this will get you into trouble, if a policeman sees it.' 'How's that?' I asked. 'What's wrong with the copper-plate?' 'Well,' says he, 'it's a plate for printing £5 notes. Where did you get it from?' And I told him. You may be sure I soon had that plate off my barrer, and, turning to the parson, I says, 'Perhaps you'll buy it off me, for a sort of nicknack?' And he gave me half-a-crown for it."

Looking slyly at me, the tinker remarked—

"When that parson got home, being a man of eddication, he would know where to get the right sort of paper, and then he would make £5 notes cheap, you bet."

For several Christmas Eves past, this tinker's boy and a little pal have walked some miles from a neighbouring town to sing carols at my Rectory door. They possess good voices and sing very tunefully some of the old carols, "God rest you, merry gentlemen," and the like.

One summer afternoon, in the market-place at Hull, I met two grinders coming out of a tavern, near which stood a tinker's barrow belonging to one of them, Golias Gray, a Gypsy, whom I had seen

before at fair-times in the seaport town. "Black as the ace of spades" is Golias, and he was, as usual, sporting a yellow shirt. His pale-faced companion, a stranger to me, after a little talk, waxed communicative, and, whilst his Gypsy pal resumed his grinding of knives, he gave me a short list of words in *Shelta* (Tinker's Talk).

SHELTA.	ENGLISH.
Binni	Little.
Bog	To get.
Buer	Woman, wife.
Cam	Son.
Gap	To kiss.
Gosh	To sit.
Granni	To know.
Hin	One.
Ken	House.
Minkler	Tinker.
Mizzle	To go.
Monkeri	Country.
Mush	Umbrella.
Nyok	Head.
Od	Two.
Sonni	To see.
Stammer	To spit.
Stimmer	Pipe.
Sweebli	Boy.
Thari	To speak.
Tober	Road.

CHAPTER XVI

THE INN ON THE RIDGEWAY—TALES BY THE FIRESIDE

AT one time I had a great liking for long jaunts in search of fossils—cross-country rambles extending over two or three days. Thus I came to know many a deserted quarry and unfrequented byway of our county, as well as the bedchambers of sundry remote wayside inns—"hedge-taverns," perhaps some would have described these lonely little houses of call. Occasionally, however, I lighted upon an inn which had seen better days, a sleepy old house with mullioned casements, a worn mounting-block of stone, and a rude iron ring still fixed in the wall near the deep porch before which an unfenced stretch of sward dipped towards the roadway.

Let me recall one of my geologizing expeditions on an early March day. I had been successful in my quest, and my knapsack, laden with stony spoils, was not very light. But what matter? It was fine to be striding along a ridgeway with a roaring gale behind, and every wayside tree whistling like a ship's rigging in a storm. Going along that road,

I stretched out my limbs, and in so doing the very thews and sinews of the mind became more elastic. Straight from the reddening west blew the wild whirling wind, which, like some old giant, frolicsome yet kind, spread out its open palms upon my back, fairly shoving me along. This was living—this fine exaltation, this surging up of joyous emotions; and from a gnarled ash tree a storm-thrush with throbbing speckled throat told the same tale of a heart set free from every care. Such was my mood when at a turn of the road a red-shawled figure, surely a Gypsy, appeared for a moment and as suddenly was lost to sight down a gloomy yew-fringed drive leading to the rear of a low grey mansion. She'll be out again presently, thought I; so I resolved to await the woman's reappearance.

Meanwhile, like a spreading forest fire, the sunset flung its flaming crimson far over the land. Tree boughs and boles caught the glow, and underfoot the very grasses burnt by winter frosts seemed dyed with blood. Across a riot of sundown colours, black rooks were heading for their resting-place in the upland woods rugged against a castle-phantasy of lurid cloud piled up in the east.

Loitering there, methought of the wandering Gypsies who in other days had passed along this desolate road. I seemed again to behold a gang of slouching Herons, swarthy, black-eyed, secretive, accompanied by their pack-ponies and donkeys carrying tent-rods, pots, and pans. Who shall say what

processions of old Romany souls, long departed, here visit the glimpses of the moon?

The moments flew by, but no Gypsy came. A little longer I waited, pacing sharply up and down the roadway, then as the red shawl had not put in an appearance, visions of a cosy meal by the fire of a certain inn began to beckon alluringly, so I started on my way again. Soon I forgot all about the Gypsy, who by this time had probably done a good stroke in the *dukerin* line among the servants of the mansion. However, a rutted, grassy lane turning off to the left drew one's eye towards a gorsy corner where the chimney of a Gypsy van flung a drooping trail of smoke over the tangles, and, going forward, I shouted in the doorway, "Anybody at home?"

A man's scared face looked out. Perhaps he had expected a command to quit his corner and draw out into the windy night. A moment later in a tone of relief, he said—

"Now I know who you are. You'll be the *rashai* I met wi' Jonathan Boswell by the watermill. Don't you remember I moved away when you began to *roker* (talk)? My pal Boswell wanted to have you to himself. That's why I took my hook. But come inside a bit. This wind's enough to blow your wery *bal avri*" (hair off).

How strange it is that if a Gypsy has seen you anywhere for a few moments, he is able to identify your very shadow for ever after.

Gladly I joined Old Frank in his cheery *vâdo*, which certainly suggested comfort and gaiety to this traveller on the wild March evening.

"You gave me a bit of a shock," said Frank. "At first I took you for a *muskro* (constable), but as soon as the light of my lamp fell on your face I reckernized you in a minute."

We talked awhile of Old Jonathan, whose faithful consort Fazzy had passed away up in Yorkshire. This brought to mind the red-shawled woman whom I had seen down the road.

"That'll be my *monushni* (wife). I expect her home di-rectly. When she comes, you pretend to be a *muskro*"—this with a broad grin. "Say roughish-like, 'Wasn't your name Liddy West afore you was married?' Then draw out a bit of paper, a letter folded long or anythink like that'll do, and say, 'I've come to take you for fortune-telling.'"

No one understands the whole art and mystery of practical joking better than the Gypsy, and he dearly loves to play pranks even upon his fellows. It is part and parcel of the Gypsy's innate spirit of mischief, examples of which I have seen not a few in my time.

Having acquiesced in the joke, our talk presently ran on *muskros*.

"*Muskros sî jukels*" (policemen are dogs), said the Gypsy.

"There was a pal of mine who was up to card

games [sharping?], and at Doncaster Races he happened to drop a word or two in *Romanes* (Gypsy tongue) to a mate. A *muskro* was standing near, and bless me if he didn't *jin* the *tshib* (know the language), and of course my pal and his mate was *lel'd oprê* (taken up). 'Pend upon it, *muskros* is *jukels*."

A good step farther along the road stood the tavern, the "Black Boy," whose swinging sign of an Ethiopian countenance I was eager to see, since I was to spend the night there in order to resume my fossil-hunting on the morrow.

"Come and see me a little later at the *kitshima* (inn) down the road, and mind you bring the missis and your fiddle." As I rose to go, I noticed Frank gave a sidelong glance at my bulging knapsack, and in order to satisfy his curiosity, I took out a fossil, a fine *gryphea incurva*, on seeing which he drew back, holding up his hands in real or mock horror, I could scarcely say which.

"*Dâbla*, that be one of the Devil's toe-nails, wery onlucky stuff to carry about you! Wherever did you get it from?"

"Off the *Beng's pîro* (Devil's foot), to be sure," I said, with a laugh, and renewed my invitation pressingly. He promised to come.

What a relief to stretch your limbs before a glowing fire inside an old-fashioned inn, when boisterous winds are shaking the window-panes and driving the loose straw from the cobbled yard into the hedge bottoms. No stranger at this house on

the ridgeway, I know every nook of the room. There is the old gun still reared up in yonder corner. From nails in the cross-beams hang flitches of bacon and bulky hams. Plates and dishes arranged on racks glitter in the firelight. The pewter mugs on the dresser and the bright copper warming-pan hanging on the wall reflect the glow of the ruddy flames darting up the wide chimney. Here and there hang modern oleographs whose crude tints have been softened by smoke.

Tea is set on a table over which a lamp hanging from a hook in the ceiling casts a pleasant radiance. During my meal the landlord, ruddy of countenance, looks in and greets me in a friendly way. From his talk with his wife, a slight, frail-looking woman of seventy who sits darning by the fire, I gather that a horse is very ill in the stable, and any moment the veterinary surgeon is expected. Presently, the barking of a dog in the front of the inn announces his arrival in a gig, and the landlord hurries out with a storm-lantern in his hand. In a few minutes, the two men enter, and before the fire the burly vet rubs his hands, talks in clear, sharp tones, then, tossing off a "scotch" smoking hot, he wishes us good-night. Whereupon the innkeeper goes off to the stable.

Tea over, a small maid with chestnut hair and spotless pinafore clears the table, and I move to the high-backed settle opposite the landlady. In the fire-grate a huge chunk of wood burns brightly,

and every now and then a puff of wood-smoke comes out into the room.

Addressing the old lady, I inform her that I am expecting some visitors to see me to-night, and they are stopping in a little lane down the road.

"Why, we had those Gypsies up here this morning. Their faces are well known round here, though we don't have them so much as we used to do. You take an interest in Gypsies, don't you, sir? At least I've heard it said that you do. They don't often set foot inside your church, I should think?"

"Sometimes they do, and their reverent behaviour would certainly put to shame some of the more regular attenders. If their unfamiliarity with print leads them to hold a borrowed book upside down, they do at anyrate kneel upon their knees instead of squatting upon the benches, and I have never once known them to go to sleep during sermon-time."

Speaking about Gypsies and churches, I am reminded of a funny experience I once had all through a Gypsy cabman's mistake.

I had promised to take an afternoon service at a village church miles away in the country, and the road to it was unfamiliar to me. On my naming the place, the driver said that he knew every inch of the road, and, trusting myself in his hands, we bowled along for several miles, and at

last struck off into a tangle of green lanes. A few minutes before the hour of service—three o'clock—my driver put me down at an old grey stone church, saying, "Here we are, sir." Entering the church, I found a congregation assembled, and, going into the belfry, I asked for the vestry wherein to robe.

"We ain't got one here. Our pass'n dresses hisself in his house and comes in at that little door." The sexton then conducted me to a chantry-chapel full of dusty figures of knights and their ladies lying side by side with their feet resting upon their hounds. There I robed and awaited the ceasing of the bells. When they stopped, I stepped towards the prayer desk, when, to my astonishment, there appeared through the small door in the chancel a fully-robed parson, white-headed and bowed with age. We met and exchanged astonished glances.

Said I, "I'm afraid there is some mistake."

He shook his head. "I'm deaf, and can't hear a word you say." He then went to his desk, and knelt before commencing evensong.

It was an uncomfortable five minutes for me. I could hear the congregation tittering and the mixed choir giggling. In despair I went to the lady organist, and asked for the name of the church. Her reply made it clear that I had come to the wrong village, and, rushing out by the chancel door, I sought my cabby, whom I rated soundly for his blunder. For-

tunately my destination was no more than a mile and a half farther on.

In a little while, the tavern door opened noisily, admitting a rush of wind. There was a sound of naily boots on the threshold, and Gypsy Frank and his wife entered. In a few moments they were happy enough on the black settle with mugs of good Newark brew in front of them.

Just before the Gypsies had arrived, I had been studying a pocket-map of the locality, and once again I had an old impression confirmed that many out-of-the-way country districts are dotted over with place-names bearing witness to the prevalence of Gypsy encampments in the past. I mean such names as "Gypsy Lane," "Gypsy Nook," "Gypsy Dale," and the like. On the map I had noted a "Gypsy Corner," "Gypsy Bridge," and "Gypsy Ford."

It was about "Gypsy Ford" that I put a question to Old Frank sitting by my side, and he described the shallow crossing at a bend in the river over which before now I had passed by a narrow plank-bridge. According to my Gypsy, one night many years ago a quarrel arose in the Romany tents encamped near the ford, and in the course of a fight between two kinsmen, one of them was slain. Speedily a grave was dug, and, the corpse having been covered up, the Gypsies fled the spot. This affair became widely known, and little wonder that a legend arose about a "something" having been seen in the neighbourhood of the ford.

"You's mebbe heard," said Frank, "about Gypsy Jack's wife, 'Flash' Rosabel, who was drowned at the ford on just such a wild night as this."

" 'Let's camp in the lane on this side of the water,' says Jack's wife.

" ' *Keka* ' (No), says he, 'not in this *drom* (road) where the *mulo* (ghost) walks. With a bright moon like this, our *grai* (horse) will see to pull us through the river all right, never fear.'

"Anyway, he whipped up the horse and steered straight into the ford. And then a sad thing happened. There had been a deal o' rain and the stream was bigger and stronger than Jack had any idea of. Somewheres about the middle of the river, the hoss was swept off its feet, the wagon tumbled over on to its side, and poor old 'Flash' Rosabel was carried away and drowned. Jack allus said that the *grai* must have *dik'd* the *mulo*" (the horse must have seen the ghost). "That's a tale what's been told by many a traveller's fire."

Just then the publican came in, panting after a tussle with the wind, and, being on good terms with my Gypsy friends, he said, "I'm glad to see you've brought your music. Gi' us a tune, Frank." Then the Gypsy, taking his fiddle from its baize bag, screwed up the strings, and, having tuned them to his liking, gave us a merry air from memory's repertoire. At the back of the clear cantabile of the air, you heard the deep roar of the storm. Once I



A ROMANY FIDDLER

Photo, Fred Shaw.]

[*To face p. 222*

went to the window and looked out into the night. Athwart the white moonlit road lay the sharp black shadows of the ash trees rising from the far hedgerow, and, as I watched the swaying, writhing boughs, a lonely horseman sped past, a phantom he seemed more than a living being, and, returning to my nook in the ingle, I heard in fancy all through the Gypsy's music the haunting clatter of the night-rider's horse, and wondered what mysterious mission had called him forth on this riotous March evening. Now the fiddler ceased, and his pewter was forthwith replenished. "Good ale, this," says Frank, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Why, yes," put in the landlady, looking over her spectacles, and glad, if the truth be known, to give her darning a rest; "it's Newark ale, and no better drink could any man wish for; we've sold nothing else for years."

Said the landlord, who by this time had recovered his breath—

"That was a strange case as I see'd in the paper t'other day about the wise woman getting 'trapped' by the constable's wife as went to have her fortune told. The paper said as how a crystal ball were used, but I'm blest if I knows how anybody can expect to see their future in a thing o' that sort."

"Dunno so much about that," remarked Old Liddy, who had been dreaming over the fire. "A woman as had a crystal once told my dad he would go to

prison in a fortnight, and sure enough he did, along wi' a conjurer who'd been up to his tricks, and dad says to him when they was in jail, 'A mighty poor conjurer you be, my fine fellow, if you can't conjure us out of this place.' I believes there *is* summut in crystals."

And then I was tempted to tell how a clairvoyant's crystal once did me a good turn. Let me explain that many years ago, when I was a curate on the Wolds, our Rector's aged wife used to bring me rare wild-flowers to be named, and thus I won a place in the lady's good books.

Time passed, and the Rector's wife died. Not long after, I moved away to another sphere of work. Then came the news of the decease of the old Rector himself. One morning, twenty years after quitting that Wold parish, a letter reached me, asking if I had been a curate with Canon A—— in such and such years, and further inquiring whether my wife Elizabeth was still alive. Of course I had no difficulty in satisfying the writer of the letter, and his speedy reply brought an agreeable enclosure in the form of a cheque, a little legacy bequeathed to us by a codicil to the will of the old Rector's wife who loved wild-flowers. But the strangest part of the story is yet to come. During a visit to London, the wife of the present parson of our old parish visited a clairvoyant who by the aid of a crystal declared that in the drawing-room of her home stood a small brass-

handled writing-table containing several drawers, in one of which would be found on examination a bundle of papers long neglected. On returning home, the writing-table was duly searched, with the result that the forgotten codicil was disclosed, and in it were mentioned some legacies bequeathed to friends, several of whom had since passed away, but my wife and I happened to be among the survivors. Thus there came to us, as I have said, an agreeable arrival by the morning post, so that if "seeing is believing," my wife and I ought nevermore to scoff at clairvoyants and their crystals.

"*Dawdi!*" (expression of surprise) exclaimed Liddy, with something of a gasp in her voice, while Old Frank looked wonder struck.

"Well, that licks all I've ever heard," said the publican, slapping his knee in punctuation of his surprise. "Now let's have another tune, Frank."

Whereupon the fiddler broke into a Scottish air with variations, his body swaying to and fro the while. During several staves, the player laid his cheek on the violin in a fashion so comical that at the end of the tune I could not refrain from remarking—

"You reminded me just now, my pal, of Wry-necked Charley the *boshomengro*" (fiddler). With a good-natured grin he replied—

"So you know that tale about the fiddler?"

And here it is, in my own words.

Charley Lovell, a fiddler of renown, was returning one evening after a tiring day's fiddling at a village feast. On the way to his tent, which was pitched in a disused quarry, the Gypsy took from his pocket a few coins he had received by way of payment. "Poor luck, I call it, to be paid like this for such hard work." Thus commiserating himself, he trudged along the sunken lane leading to his tent. Imagine his surprise to find at the tent door a tall gentleman dressed in black broad-cloth. Dark of complexion, black-eyed, and polished in demeanour, the stranger turned to meet the Gypsy.

"Good evening, sir," said Charley, bowing low, for he had the sense to perceive that a gentleman stood before him. "Pray what can I do for you?"

"A great kindness," responded the stranger, "for I have heard of your skilful playing upon this wonderful instrument" (tapping Charley's fiddle with his finger), "and I wish to know if you will come to play at a dance of mine to-morrow night." The place and hour were named, and the Gypsy promised to be there.

"Open your hands, my man;" and into them the stranger emptied a pocketful of silver coins, and departed, smiling over his shoulder at the perplexed Gypsy. All that night Charley tossed restlessly on his bed of straw. "A fore-handed payment, and generous too. Who can that dark gentleman be?" In the morning the Gypsy betook himself to a neighbouring priest, who, on hearing his story, looked grave.

"You have made a bargain with the Devil."

"Then tell me how I can get out of it."

"You must keep your engagement, for, if you don't, the Devil will fetch you."

"But what am I to do when I get there?"

"If you do as I say, all will be well. When you are asked to strike up, you must be sure to play nothing but slow, solemn psalm tunes. Mind you do as I say."

At the appointed hour the trembling fiddler stood on the moonlit sward within the walls of a ruined castle. Awaiting his arrival was the tall dark gentleman surrounded by his guests, an array of lords and ladies in silks and satins. When the signal was given for the fiddler to commence his music, Charley drew his bow over the strings, evoking none but psalm tunes, solemn and slow, as the priest had advised. After a few moments of this sort of music, the Devil marched up to the Gypsy, and, fixing his large black eyes upon him, said—

"Give us something more lively at once."

"I cannot," said the Gypsy.

"Then, take *that!*"—and the Devil struck Charley a smart blow on the cheek, twisting the poor fellow's head on one side, and so it ever remained. After that, he was always known as "Wry-necked" Charley.

As the clock was striking the hour of ten, the rural tavern's closing-time, my Gypsy friends stepped out into the night.

All through the long hours the wind howled in the chimney and rattled the casements, and one traveller at least slept but fitfully in his four-poster draped with curtains of red damask.

In the morning the landlord informed me at breakfast that a tree had been blown down across the road, and, while "rembling" under his overturned straw-stack, a fine fox was found smothered, and, "See here," he said, "I shall always think of last night whenever I look at this," holding up a beautiful tawny brush.

The storm-rack was still scudding overhead as I bade adieu to the quaint pair on the footworn doorstep of the "Black Boy" on the ridgeway.

CHAPTER XVII

HORNCASTLE FAIR

LIKE Lincoln, York, and Chester, the town of Horncastle originated within the boundaries of a Roman *castrum*, and to this day an old-world atmosphere clings to its narrow, cobbled streets.

Readers who know their Borrow will recall the visit of "The Romany Rye" to Horncastle in the August of 1825, in order to sell a horse which he had purchased by means of a loan from his Gypsy friend Jasper.

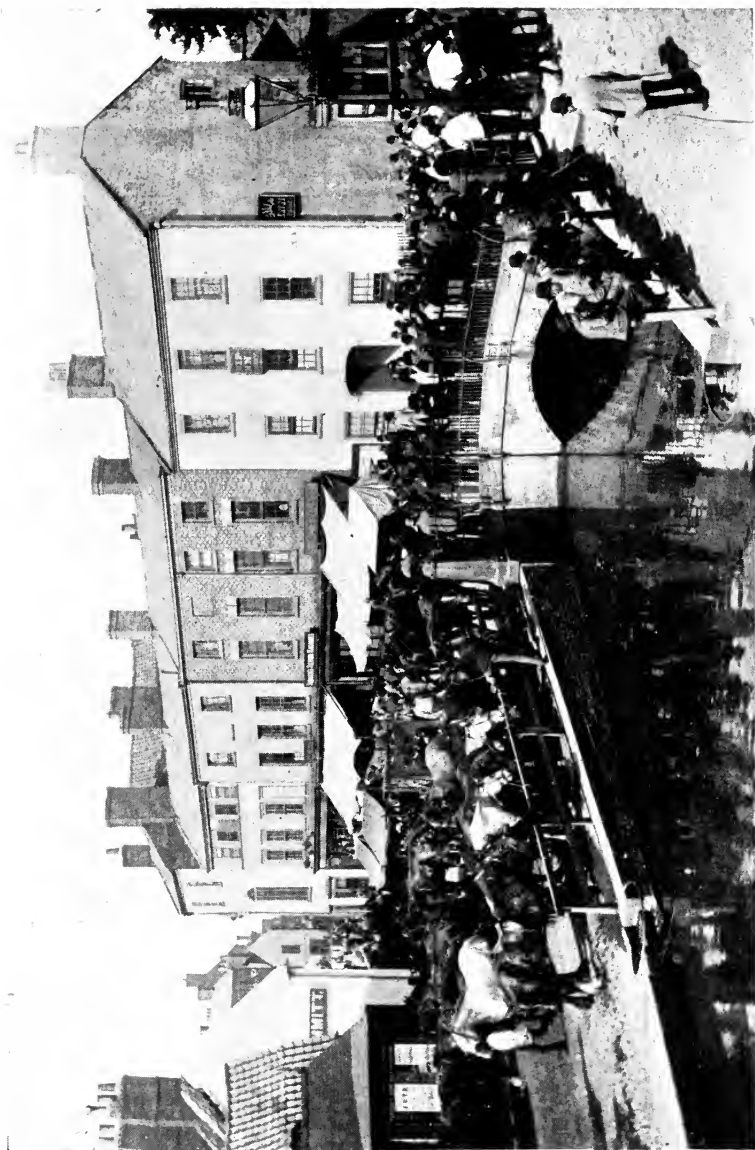
Nowhere perhaps are the changes wrought by the passing years more plainly seen than at a horse-fair of ancient standing. Horncastle has inhabitants who remember when the great August Horse-Fair occupied fully a fortnight or three weeks, and was widely recognized as an event of the first rank. Within my own observation, this fair, like others of its kind, has declined with swift strides. In my time, buyers would be present from all parts of the country, as well as from the Continent, and members of our best Gypsy families invariably made a point of attending. In all these respects, however, the once famous fair has dwindled in a very marked manner.

Let me describe a twentieth-century visit to the August horse-mart.

Having approached the town along a bold ridge-way commanding a countryside yellowing to harvest, I arrive to find the place astir with dealers and horses. Though now but a one-day affair, the mart is not without its pleasing aspects to a lover of such scenes. The chief centre of business is known as the Bull Ring, where well-clad dealers from our English towns, horsey-looking men slapping their thighs with malacca canes, rub shoulders with rubicund farmers from Wold and Marsh, grooms and Gypsies. Not for the purpose of buying or selling horses have I come hither, but for no other reason than to meet the Gypsy families who usually turn up at the fair.

Behind the Parish Church of St. Mary, in a pasture pleasantly open to the sun, numerous caravans are drawn up under the hedges. It is here that the better sort of Gypsies congregate. Down Hemingby Lane lies an encampment of poorer travellers, and some of the same sort of people have drawn into the yard of the "New Inn." In the course of the day I shall visit these three companies of Gypsies.

Meanwhile, passing over the Bain Bridge, I step inside the old Parish Church and, taking out from my pocket a well-thumbed copy of *The Romany Rye*, I turn to the passage where Borrow talks with the sexton about the rusty scythes hanging on the wall. Just then a lady, evidently an American tourist, who has been looking



HORNCASTLE HORSE FAIR.

Photo, Carlion

up Tennyson's footprints, which abound hereabouts, asks :—

“Can you tell me anything about those strange-looking things on the wall?”

Various theories have been advanced to account for the presence of these old scythe-blades within the sacred building, the popular opinion being that they were used as instruments of war at Winceby Fight on 11th October 1643. So much, indeed, Borrow seems to have gathered from the sexton, but the better-informed authorities of to-day think that they are relics of the rising known as the Pilgrimage of Grace in the year 1536.

Quitting the fine old church, I passed out into the fair, and straightway met a Gypsy fingering a telegram. “Will you read it for me, please?” The message was from a popular Baroness who was desirous of borrowing a caravan for a bazaar; and as I pencilled a reply on the back of the telegram, the Gypsy declared that he would sleep in a tent till his “house on wheels” returned to him.

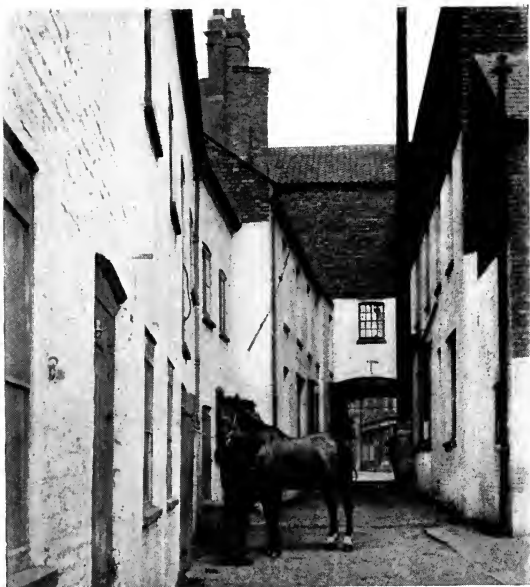
I have always known that Gypsies readily help one another when in trouble. This man, before going off with his telegram, told me a pleasing thing. It appears that an aged Gypsy, whose horse had died suddenly, had no money to buy another with, but a pal of his, going round with a cap among the Gypsy dealers at the fair, had quickly taken ten pounds, which were handed up to the old man who was now able to buy himself an animal.

In *The Romany Rye*, Borrow speaks of the inn where he put up as having a yard which opened into the principal street of the town. On entering that yard he was greeted by the ostlers with—"It is no use coming here—all full—no room whatever;" whilst one added in an undertone, "That 'ere a'n't a bad-looking horse." In a large upstairs room overlooking a court, the newcomer dined with several people connected with the fair.

During former visits to Horncastle I had tried to identify Borrow's inn, but without result. Happily, on the present occasion, I came upon a local antiquary from whom I gathered that Borrow's inn was undoubtedly the "George," now converted into a post office. Strolling down the quondam inn-yard, my friend pointed out the bow-window through which the jockey so neatly pitched his bottle of pink champagne. Also, he told a good tale of the fair in its palmy days—

Public-houses, though very numerous in the town, were yet unable to supply the fair folk with all the drink they required, and any householder could take out what was called a Bough Licence on payment of seven shillings and sixpence. Having decided to take out such a licence, a man and his wife obtained a barrel of beer and displayed the customary green bough over their door. On the eve of the fair the husband said to his wife—

"I'll see if this beer is good."



THE "GEORGE" INN YARD AT HORNCastle.
Photo, Carlton.]



READY FOR THE FAIR.
Photo, Fred Shaw.]

[To face p. 232.

"You won't without paying for it."

"Very well, my dear, I'll have three-pen'orth," handing over the coins to his wife.

He appeared to enjoy it so much that she said—

"Let me have three-pen'orth," handing the pence to her husband. Then he had another drink, passing the threepence back again. And the same coppers passed to and fro until the barrel was empty.

It was to Horncastle Fair, years ago, that Jem Mace came with his master, Nat Langham, to whom he had been introduced at Lincoln Fair, where Nat had a sparring troupe which he had brought down from the metropolis. At Horncastle, Jem had a tremendous glove-fight with the local champion, who was the terror of the district. This fellow was bigger and older than Mace, who was then only in his eighteenth year, and for a long time the issue was doubtful, but at last the Horncastle champion was licked to a standstill, and had to give in.

Walking down a crooked by-lane, past a shop where a chatty little tailor sat repairing a scarlet hunting-coat (the South Wolds Kennels lie a few miles outside the town), I found a camp of Gypsies in a field, and near one of the fires on the grass sat Liddy Brown, a crone of seventy years, puffing a black pipe, her curls peeping from beneath a gay *diklo* (kerchief). In the course of our talk, she spoke

of our hilly country, and recalled the days when her folk had pack-donkeys and camped in the green lanes on the Wolds. A grand-daughter of Fowk Heron, she had some diverting reminiscences of her mother Mizereti, and her aunts Cinderella and Tiena. The last-named was bitten by a mad dog, and thereby came to an untimely end.

Returning to the town, I looked into the "New Inn" yard and found a number of Gypsies stopping there. The women and girls had donned their smartest fair-going raiment. As I viewed these wanderers, it was not easy to realize that they were the lingering remnants of the once powerful tribes of Browns and Winters hailing from the Border country in the days of Sheriff Walter Scott.

Passing through the archway of the inn, I mingle again with the crowd, but no thimblengro, no Irish Murtagh, no Jack Dale meet the eye, though, curiously enough, from the racing stables at Baumber, where the Derby winner of 1875—Prince Batthyany's Galopin—was born, there are two or three jockeys looking more than usually diminutive among the burly dealers in the street.

Towards the end of the afternoon the fair began to slacken. The few remaining groups of horses seemed to have gone to sleep in the sultry Bull Ring. Already farmers were moving off in their light traps, and dealers were making for the railway station. Going along the riverside path I saw a Gypsy man asleep at the foot of a tree, and, climbing

a fence, I found myself in the encampment behind the church. The scene was enlivening. Seated around their fires most of the Gypsies were making ready for the evening meal. Near a little tent the aged Mrs. Petulengro, a veritable "Mother in Egypt," was lighting her pipe. Her grand-daughter coming out of the tent offers her a stool to sit upon, but the old lady scorns the idea. "I should tumble off a thing like that. I'm better down here," pointing to a sack spread by the fire beside which two kettles are hissing.

In various parts of the field the Petulengros are gathered together. Here are tall Alfy and Hook-nosed Suki, "Rabbitskin" Bob, and "Ratcatcher" Charley. During supper, I had to listen to a disquisition on lying from Suki. Put into a nutshell, her ideas amount to this: Lying is of two kinds. There is lying for a living, else how could any sort of business be carried on. But business deceptions are not to be mentioned in the same breath with nasty lies which are meant to "hurt a body."

"Do you remember, *rashai*, that time we met you by Newark, when Elijah was with us? A jolly old fellow he were. He often got into *staruben* (prison) for fighting but never for stealing. He would go through an orchard, like that one there" (pointing to some apple-trees close by), "but do you think he'd ever pick up an apple? Not he, he'd never steal nothink, wouldn't Elijah. He could stand hard knocks, and would only fight a better man than hisself. He was

that tough, nothing ever hurt him. He would lay asleep under a wagon with never a shirt on him and take no harm."

Elijah was one of three brothers—tall, powerful fellows. Sometimes the trio, Elijah, Master, and Swallow, would enter a lonely tavern, and having ordered ale would depart without paying for it. When the publican protested, the Gypsies displayed their brawny arms and huge fists before his face. One day they had performed this favourite trick several times, and were paying an evening call at a village inn, where they sat a long time. Waxing quarrelsome, the brothers first brawled among themselves, and afterwards got at cross-purposes with a farmer in the tap-room. In the course of a tussle with this person, Swallow fell upon him as he lay on the floor, and, as they struggled there, a steel rush-threading needle of large size, used in mending chair bottoms, dropped from the Gypsy's pocket. Seizing this, Elijah pricked the farmer in the ribs, and then flung the needle at the feet of Swallow, who picked it up. The farmer's cries attracted the attention of a village constable who was going by.

"Eh, what's the matter here?" said the constable, stepping into the tap-room.

"These Gypsies are trying to murder me," said the farmer. "One of 'em's stuck me with a long knife as he's got about him."

The pockets of the Gypsies were searched, and

the steel needle was found upon Swallow. As the constable held it up between his fingers, the farmer cried—

“That’s it. That’s what he tried to kill me with.”

The three brothers were arrested and underwent their trial, with the result that Elijah and Master were sent to prison for a year, but poor Swallow, although innocent of the charge made against him, was transported for fourteen years.

By that Gypsy fire the evening meal passed pleasantly enough, and when at a later hour I returned to the town, the darkened houses were framing the cobbled street, and through the open window of a tavern I caught a soft Romany phrase along with the clinking of glasses. And then from under the archway of the inn yard a dwarfish Gypsy, mounted on a lean horse, rode off with a great clatter into the dusk.

CHAPTER XVIII

A GYPSY SEPULCHRE—BURIAL LORE—THE PASSING OF JONATHAN

IN Tetford churchyard, not far from my Rectory on the Lincolnshire Wolds, lies the grave of two celebrated Gypsies, Tyso Boswell and Edward, or "No Name," Hearn (Heron), who were killed by lightning on 5th August 1831. The incident seems to have made a profound impression upon our Gypsies, and to this day it is everywhere remembered among the Anglo-Romany clans. A large company of the Boswells and Hearn (Heron) appear to have halted at Tetford on their way to Horncastle August Fair, at that time a horse-mart of great importance. Overtaken by a thunderstorm, Tyso and No Name were sheltering in a barn, whither they had gone for some straw, when a stroke of lightning descended fatally upon them.

An aged Gypsy, Lucy Brown (born in the year 1807), once informed me that she remembered the incident quite clearly. Said she, "We were camping atop of Tetford Hill, just above Ruckland Valley, when the lightning struck the poor fellows. We

were on our way to Horncastle Fair. I mind it all, *rashai*, as if it had happened only yesterday."

In Westarus Boswell's autobiography, recorded (in his own words) by Smart and Crofton in their work *The Dialect of the English Gypsies*, are some references to this event—

"I was born at Dover. My father (Tyso) was a soldier, and I was born in the army. My father, when I was born, was in charge of 'the great gun (Queen Anne's pocket-piece). After a while he came home, and left the army. He came down into Yorkshire, and there he stayed for many years, and all our family were brought up in that county, and there we all stayed after he was killed in Lincolnshire. He died when I was a lad. The lightning struck him and another, both together. They were cousins. Our people put them both in one grave. There I left them, poor fellows. I was much grieved at it. He (Tyso) always dressed well. When he was buried, I took a wife, and went all over the country. . . . His cousin's name was called No Name, because he was not christened till he was an old man, and then they called him Edward."

A curious story attaches to "No Name" Hearn. His parents took him to church to be christened, and when the parson said, "Name this child," the Gypsy mother answered, "It's Jehovah, sir." "I cannot give your child that name," protested the clergyman. Whereupon the Gypsies stalked out of

the church muttering, "He shall be called 'No Name,'" and by this fore-name he was known all through his life, although in his old age, as Westarus Boswell has told us, he was baptized in the name of Edward.

As might be expected, the funeral of Tyso and Edward was attended by many Gypsies from far and near, and for some years afterwards the grave was visited annually by relatives, who are said to have poured libations of ale upon it. A grandson of Tyso relates that he once found a hole "as big as a fire bucket" in the side of the grave. This he stuffed with hay, and to my own knowledge the hole is still there, the brickwork of the vault having fallen inward. Aged folk at Tetford tell how a witch formerly lived in a cottage near the churchyard. One of her cats kitted down the hole in the vault, and passers-by would shudder to see the kittens bolt like rabbits into the Gypsies' grave.

If the Gypsies possess any religion at all, it may be summed up in one sentence—reverence for the dead. In bygone ages the Gypsies buried their dead in wild lonely spots, and though for many years the wanderers have been granted Christian burial, yet now and then an aged *Romanitshel* on his deathbed will express a desire to be laid to rest in the open and not in the churchyard. Moses Boswell, a Derbyshire Gypsy, requested that he might be buried "under the fireplace," *i.e.* on the site of an encamp-

ment of his people. When dying, Isaac Heron said, "Bury me under a hedge," a reminiscence of the earlier mode of sepulture. In his *Lavengro*, Borrow describes the burial of old Mrs. Herne: "The body was placed not in a coffin but on a bier, and carried not to the churchyard but to a deep dingle close by; and there it was buried beneath a rock, dressed just as I have told (in a red cloak and big bonnet of black beaver); and this was done at the bidding of Leonora, who had heard her *bebee* (aunt) say that she wished to be buried, not in gorgeous fashion, but like a Roman woman of the old blood."

On the information of some East-Anglian Gypsies, my friend, Mr. T. W. Thompson, a good tsiganologue, writes: "It must have been somewhere about 1830 when Borrow's friend, Ambrose Smith (Jasper Petulengro), found one of the Hernes burying his wife in a ditch near Gorleston, took the body away and gave it a Christian burial to prevent further trouble befalling the old man."

In an entertaining volume entitled, *Caravanning and Camping Out*, Mr. J. Harris Stone describes a wayside Gypsy burial—

"Some twenty years ago a Gypsy died in an encampment near Lulworth Cove in Dorset, and a friend of mine, who had become great friends with the tribe because he used to go and sing comic songs to them and perform simple conjuring tricks, was asked to the funeral. He told me that the coffin was black, and the burial took place at the cross-roads—

not exactly in the centre of the roadway where the highways crossed, but on the patch of roadside waste at the angle of one of the roads. Water was sprinkled on the coffin and earth thrown on, in the course of the ritual in Romany, but no parson was present."

Near the grass-grown sand-dunes of an East Lincolnshire parish is a camping-place frequented by Gypsies for many years past. In turning up the soil thereabouts not long ago, some labourers came upon a human skeleton, probably that of a Gypsy who had been buried there.

I give these instances because it has been strongly asserted that Christian burial only has been the Gypsies' usage for the last two hundred years.

Sometimes a careful watch is kept over the body between death and burial. A Welsh correspondent who had an opportunity of observing this practice, writes: "I found my Romany friends seated around a fire, and close by in a van lay the dead wife of one of the company, awaiting burial on the morrow. Gypsies about here do not go to bed from the time of a death till after the funeral. They sit in company around the fire, and now and again fall back and doze, but at least three must keep awake. If only two were awake, one might drop off to sleep and that would leave only one. Fear of the ghost is given as the reason why they sit in company by the fire."

As a rule, the corpse is attired in the best clothes worn during life. Sometimes the garments are turned

inside out, a practice in Bulgarian mourning. When Zachariah Smith was buried in Yorkshire four years ago the following articles were enclosed in his coffin : a suit of clothes, besides the one he was wearing, watch and chain, a muffler, four pocket handkerchiefs, a hammer, a candle, and twopence.

On the day after the funeral, old-fashioned Gypsies destroy the possessions of the dead, money excepted. All consumable belongings are burnt, while the crockery, iron utensils, and other articles are broken and dropped into a river, or buried, if no water is near. Jewellery is often disposed of in a similar manner. The horse of the deceased is either shot, or sold to the knackers to be destroyed. Fear of the ghost is the explanation of these ceremonies. So long as the possessions of the dead person remain intact, the ghost is believed to hover about them. In order, therefore, to dispel the ghost of the dead, his belongings are destroyed.

Another observance, expressing in a striking manner the grief of the bereaved, is seen in their abstention for many years, or for ever, from the favourite food, beverage, or pastime of the loved one whom they have lost. One day Richard Petulengro called at my door and was offered refreshment in the kitchen—"Not any ale, thank you. My brother died a bit ago, and he was wery fond of it. I don't touch it now."

It is recorded of Old Isaac Joule that he would often spend whole nights watching by his Gypsy wife's

tomb in Yatton churchyard. Her headstone, which may still be seen, bears the lines—

“Here lies Merily Joule
A beauty bright :
That left Isaac Joule
Her heart's delight
1827.”

Sometimes unusual articles are laid on graves. Upon his boy's grave, Bohemia Boswell deposited a little teapot from which the boy used to drink. Rodney Smith placed a breast-pin upon his mother's grave in Norton churchyard.

Gypsies shrink from uttering the names of the dead. Fear of invoking the ghost underlies this ancient tabu. One of the Herons had a child named Chasey, who died, and now he never utters that name. He even invented a nickname for a friend bearing the name of Chasey, in order to avoid pronouncing the name of his own dead child.

One day, during conversation with Frampton Boswell, Groome asked—

“How did you get your name, Frampton ; was it your father's?”

“I can't tell you that, but wait a minute.” And going to his mother's caravan, he returned with a framed photograph of a gravestone.

“That was my poor father's name, but I've never spoken it since the day he died.”

“He don't want her to walk,” said my old friend, Frank Elliot, in explanation of a Gypsy's reluctance

to mention his dead sister's name. A Gypsy boy was baptized Vyner Smith, but when his Uncle Vyner died, the boy was renamed Robert, because the name Vyner was too painful a reminder of the departed relation.

A death-omen among Gypsies is the cry of the "death-hawk" heard over a camp by night. A Gypsy once told me how two crows and two yellow pigeons flew to and fro over him in a town street in the early morning. By these signs he knew that his wife had died in the hospital, and so it proved.

Let me close this chapter with the passing of my old friend Jonathan Boswell. Not long ago tidings reached me that he had died in his travelling cart, in which I have spent some happy hours with him on the road. The last time I saw Jonathan alive he was seated by his fire on a little lonely common, and near him stood the old cart looking so very ramshackle that a gust of wind might almost have wrecked it. Among the tufted bog-rushes, the lambs were gambolling a few yards away. As I sat with him, my old friend talked of bygone jaunts we had taken together, and his grandson, who was present, recalled the day he once spent at our Rectory. With slow and feeble steps Jonathan walked with me to the edge of the common and waved his cap in farewell. I never saw him again. I like to think of the old man as, looking back, I saw him holding out his hand

to fondle a lamb whose confidence he had won while camping on the common.

About a month after receiving the news of the death of my old pal, I came upon his grandson, who told me that the *vâdo* (cart) had been *hotsherdo* (burnt). The fragments which remained after the fire were duly buried, and the faithful nag had been sent away to the hunt-kennels. Thus, with the ancient ceremonies of his race, my old friend had been laid to rest.

TO THE ENGLISH GIPSIES.¹

“You soon will pass away;
Laid one by one below the village steeple
You face the East from which your fathers sprang,
Or sleep in moorland turf, beyond the clang
Of towns and fairs; your tribes have joined the people
Whom no true Romany will call by name,
The folk departed like the camp-fire flame
Of withered yesterday.”

¹ *The Dark Ages and Other Poems.* By L.



Photo, Fred Shaw.]

A LONDON GYPSY.

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CHAPTER XIX

BITSHADO PAWDEL (TRANSPORTED)

THICKLY sprinkled with Gypsy names are the "Transportation Lists" (1787-1867) reposing on the shelves of the Public Record Office in London; yet as your eye scans those lists of names, how dull and ordinary they look. It is not until you embark upon the arduous task of tracking individuals in old newspaper files that you realize the charm of unearthing buried romances in which the Gypsies played a part.

If, on the one hand, the wildness and roughness of the times are fully impressed upon your mind, there arises also the unedifying spectacle of British justices vieing with one another in their ardour for dispatching Gypsies across the sea on the most trivial pretexts. In the Transportation Lists both sexes are well represented, and occasionally one obtains the *aliases* borne by Gypsies at the time of their arrest. From a study of these *aliases*, it becomes possible to trace the origin of some of our modern Gypsy families, for it is quite in keeping with Romany usage for the children of an expatriated father to adopt his *alias*.

I have never yet known an elderly Gypsy whose

memory lacked a store of what may be called transportation tales, and, listening to their recital, I have sometimes been saddened, if not angered. What can we of the twentieth century think of the "justice" (!) which sent a Romany mother across the sea for stealing a lady's comb valued at sixpence, or banished for seven years a middle-aged Gypsy man for the crime of appropriating three penny picture-books from a cottage doorway?

Over a few crimson embers on the ground I listened one summer evening to tales from the lips of one of the old Herons, as we sat together under a thorn hedge. For a theft of harness Solli Heron (my informant's uncle) was sentenced to a lengthy residence in an over-sea colony. The time came when he and a few Gypsy comrades were led out of prison and placed in chains on board the coach which was to convey them to the convict ship. By some means Solli had become possessed of a small file, wherewith, during the journey by coach, he managed to cut through his irons and make his escape into a wood. After an exciting chase through brake and brier, the Gypsy was recaptured and duly shipped across the sea.

The following story shows that sometimes, when two Gypsies were implicated in a crime, one of them would endeavour to screen his companion. From the stables at Claremont House, Esher, during the period of the Princess (afterwards Queen) Victoria's residence, a horse and a mare were stolen

by two Gypsies, an elderly man and a younger one. Early one foggy morning these fellows broke open the stable door and took the animals away. A hue-and-cry was set up, and, within a few days of the theft, the red-breasted "Runners" had made an arrest. In court, the Princess's coachman declared that he had seen two men near the stable, but the elder Gypsy persistently affirmed that he had done the business entirely alone, and his endeavour to screen his mate proved effectual. The young Gypsy was acquitted, but his companion was transported for life to Van Diemen's Land.

The same spirit of self-sacrifice is seen in another incident—

A Gypsy tinker and a sweep were arrested for stealing a pony at a time when the penalty for horse-stealing was death. Said the sweep to the tinker—

"Why need two of us be hanged for this job? I'll swear that you know nothing about it."

When the two were brought up for trial, the sweep, while readily admitting his own guilt, asserted the tinker's innocence with such vehemence that the judge and jury believed his tale. The tinker got twelve months in jail, but the sweep was hanged.

In his *Romany Word-Book*, Borrow mentions the transportation of Fighting Jack Cooper, "once the terror of all the Light Weights of the English Ring, who knocked West Country Dick to pieces, and

killed Paddy O'Leary, the fighting pot-boy, Jack Randall's pet." Jack Cooper and his brother Tom were transported under peculiar circumstances. Tom was the first to be sent away. It appears that the brothers went to a ball where, in the course of the evening, Jack "pinched" a silver snuff-box, and without meaning any harm dropped it into his brother's pocket. Presently the snuff-box was missed by its owner, and suspicion fell upon the Gypsies. A policeman was called in, and, while conversing with Tom, offered him a pinch of snuff. As the Gypsy removed a handkerchief from his pocket, out flew the snuff-box to his great astonishment, for he was unaware of the trick played by his brother. Speedily the handcuffs were slipped upon Tom's wrists, and in due course he was brought to trial. Before the judge, Jack swore that Tom was innocent, as indeed he was, but he was nevertheless sentenced to transportation.

However, Jack's fate was not long delayed. "Infatuated with love for his paramour," (says Borrow), "he bore the blame of a crime which she had committed, and suffered transportation to save her." On the expiration of his lengthy term, he preferred to stay in Australia, where he made money by teaching young gentlemen the pugilistic art.

There are more stories of this kind showing that innocent persons were at times sent across the water.

Well-known to the Gypsies of our Midland

counties is the story of Absalom Boswell's transportation. One night the Gypsy father and his two sons sat talking in their tent, and, in order to rest his weary feet, the old man removed his shoes and soon fell asleep on the straw. One of the lads donned his father's footgear, and set off with his brother to *latsher* a bit of *bokro-mas*, which, being interpreted, means that they went to steal "mutton." Their errand was successful, but morning light brought a policeman to the camp, for the sheep had been missed and suspicion had fallen upon the Gypsies. An early riser, Absalom had put on his shoes and was walking abroad. He and his two sons were arrested. There were no witnesses to the theft, but a footprint had been discovered on a patch of clay in the farmer's field from which the sheep had been taken, and Absalom's shoe fitted the footprint exactly. On this shred of circumstantial evidence the old man was transported for seven years, while his sons were lodged in jail for twelve months.

On Mitcham Common I once heard the following story from one of the Dightons. Seated on the wayside was a Gypsy making pegs, with his children playing around him, and, looking up from his work, he was surprised to see a well-dressed *gawji* (non-Gypsy) woman staring hard at him. She stood there without saying a word, until at last she moved slowly away. Then came a policeman to where the peg-maker sat—

"You must come along with me."

"What for?"

"You'll know when we get to the police station."

A report had been handed in that a young woman had been found half-murdered in a green lane. She said a Gypsy had done it, and described the man to a detail, giving the colour of his hair, particulars of his dress, and the number of his children. "I am an innocent man," said the Gypsy, "and the Lord'll make her tell the truth before she dies." He was transported for seven years. Two years afterwards the lady fell ill, and confessed that the man was innocent. He was liberated, but on the homeward voyage he died.

Yet another tale from the "tents of Egypt"—

John Chilcot was *bitshado pawdel* (transported), and his wife took it so much to heart that she would sit on the tent floor cutting up straw into pieces about an inch in length. At last she could endure it no longer. She craved for the sight of her husband, so she *tshor'd tshumani* (stole something), and was sent away too. The strange part of the story is, that the same farmer who employed Chilcot on his farm in Van Diemen's Land, went and hired John's wife when she was sent out there. The woman came to John's cottage one day about sundown, and, looking through the open door, she saw him lacing his heavy boots, as he muttered to himself, "I must *tshiv mi tshokaw oprê an' jaw te*

dik de bokrê" (I must put my boots on and go to see the sheep).

"*Áwa, mi mush, tshiv len oprê and kèr sig*" (Yes, my man, put them on and make haste). John looked up, and, seeing his own wife standing there, opened his arms and she dropped into them. The two worked together for months without the farmer knowing who the woman was, then one day John told him that she was his lawful wife, and they lived together till their time expired, when they came back to England.

A story is told of one of the old Herons who had been transported, and, his term having expired, he wrote to his wife and family in England asking them to send fifty pounds. This they did, and a reply was received announcing the time of his arrival at a certain port. As a means of identification, he promised, on landing, to carry a small bundle of sticks on his right shoulder. His sons met him, and according to his promise he had the sticks on his shoulder. Now these sons were only tiny children when their father had been sent away, and did not remember what his features were like, but of course they were willing to accept him as their father, and rejoiced accordingly. Then came the meeting between the old man and his wife. But so completely had his features changed during the long years of absence that she failed to recognize him as her husband, even though he pointed to his old bottle-

green coat still in her possession. It is said that he turned away sorrowfully, and died soon after of a broken heart.

Moses Heron was on the Thames in a convict ship going to Australia for *grai-tshorin* (horse-stealing). Some of his relatives went out in a boat to see the last of him, as his ship was anchored off shore. Moses took out his knife and cut his *diklo* (kerchief) from his neck and threw it overboard for them to take the knot back to his sweetheart. He cut the *diklo* from under his ear so that the knot was undisturbed but remained just as he had tied it.

Stories of this character might be multiplied indefinitely, but the instances given will suffice to show how pathetic are the annals of the Gypsies.

In a lecture delivered before the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, my friend, Mr. R. A. Scott Macfie, has justly estimated the character of the *Anglo-Romanitshels* of to-day.

“In Great Britain the Gypsies are at present exposed to a petty persecution, inflicted ostensibly for their good by illogical persons, who pretend to believe that they live unnatural lives and should be driven into town slums for the benefit of their health and morals. They are harassed by prosecutions on such curious pretexts as sleeping-out, overcrowding (in tents every inch of which admits the free passage of God’s fresh air), possessing no dustbin, or neglect-

ing to provide a proper water supply for their habitations. Yet, on the whole, in this country they have for the last century received less unpleasant attention and more sympathy than elsewhere, and it is very noteworthy that they have responded to this kindness by adopting the civilized conception of their duty towards their neighbour. I have many hundreds of press cuttings from British newspapers published during the last few years. They prove that the Gypsies of this country are never guilty of the greater crimes. The majority of the convictions are for almost inevitable offences, such as halting in the road or allowing horses to stray. Gypsies have, of course, rather primitive views as to rights of property, especially in respect of what grows or moves upon the earth in a more or less wild state, yet, while there are an appreciable number of instances of poaching, fortune-telling, and of certain traditional Gypsy swindles, most of the cases of so-called theft are very insignificant petty larcenies—a handful of fruit taken from an orchard, a few swedes from a field, or a stick or two from the hedge. So conspicuous is the law-abiding character of the British Gypsies in my records, and in my personal experience, that I do not hesitate to assert, that, in spite of their reputation, they are as superior in honesty to the lower classes of our native population as they are in morality and cleanliness.”

CHAPTER XX

A ROMANY MUNCHAUSEN

THE Gypsies are an imaginative folk, delighting, like children, in romances and romancing; and if one may judge from the array of folk-tales¹ already collected from them, these wanderers appear to possess the gift of story-telling in generous measure. To this day, in Eastern Europe, the Gypsies still pursue their ancient rôle of tale-telling, mystifying their hearers with stories which perhaps they brought out of India many centuries ago. Here, in the West, no one can mingle intimately with members of the Gypsy clan of Wood, amid the mountains of Wales, without feeling the charm of the wonderful tales handed down to them from their forelders.

Sometimes I have seen the beginning of a folk-tale in a fragment of narrative reeled off by a Gypsy on the spur of the moment.

A London Gypsy had been fiddling for my delectation, and, when he ceased, I asked him quite casually why, being a Gypsy, his hair was fair? Without a moment's reflection he replied, "I'll tell you why my hair is fair. One winter night I slept

¹ *Gypsy Folk-Tales*, by Francis Hindes Groome (London, 1899).

with my head outside the tent, and of course my hair froze to the ground. When I woke in the morning I shouted for help, and my daddy poured boiling water on my hair to get it loose. That's why my *bal* is *pawni*" (my hair is fair).

An impromptu "lying tale" intended to amuse.

Groome, in his *Gypsy-Folk Tales* (Introduction, p. lxxxi.), notices the same sort of thing in a fanciful outburst on the part of a Gypsy girl. "She had been to a pic-nic in a four-in-hand, with 'a lot o' real tip-top gentry'; and '*reia*' (sir), she said to me afterwards, 'I'll tell you the comicalist thing that ever was. We'd pulled up to put the brake on, and there was a *puro hotchiwitchi* (old hedgehog) come and looked at us through the hedge, looked at me hard. I could see he'd his eye on me. And home he'd go, that old hedgehog, to his wife, and "Missus," he'd say, "what d'ye think? I seen a little Gypsy gal just now in a coach and four hosses," and "*Dâbla*," she'd say, "*sawkûmi 'as vâdê kenaw*" (Bless us, every one has carriages now).'"

Years ago I used to hear our English Gypsies speak of a certain Happy Boz'll, a Gypsy given to romancing about his own affairs. He was always the hero of his own stories, and to this day, among our Gypsies, a Happy Boz'll tale is a synonym for a "crammer."

It was once my good fortune at Lincoln Fair to come upon a van-dwelling horse-dealer, close upon his eightieth year, whose early days were spent in

the company of Happy Boz'll, and from him I obtained the tales given below :—

Old Happy had a donkey, and one day it was lost. Up and down the green lanes the Gypsy searched for the missing animal and found it not. At last, as he was wandering under some trees, he heard a familiar noise overhead. The sound came from the top of a big ash tree, and sure enough, when Happy looked up, there was the old donkey among the topmost boughs.

“What are you doing there?” shouted Happy.

“I'm gathering a bundle of sticks for your fire.”

And saying this, the donkey climbed down with a bunch of nice ash sticks.

At one time Happy, who was a tinker and grinder by trade, possessed a grinding-barrow made out of a whole block of silver, and whenever he was thirsty he had only to chop off a lump of silver and go to the nearest inn to get as much ale as he could carry. In course of time his barrow grew smaller, and there came a day when Happy had no barrow at all. He had swallowed it.

One day Happy's wife, Becky, said to him—

“Go and get a bucket of drinking water.”

Away he went to the spring, and, having filled the bucket, he paused to take a drink from it, and going on again he stumbled and spilt the water. When he got home he appeared before his wife with an empty bucket in his hand.



PHOTO-FRED SHAW

BLACK AS A BOZ'LL.



"Why haven't you brought the water?" asked Becky.

"Well, my blessed, I filled the bucket right enough, but on the way back the water started a-laughing at me, and I couldn't carry it no further. Ay, the water laughed itself out of the bucket, it did—every little drop of it. There, now I've told you."

Another time Happy was crossing a field, and seeing a sack filled with something he went up and examined it, and there, if it wasn't full of eggs. He picked up the sack and carried it away on his back, and never cracked one of them.

Happy was once walking beside a hedge, cracking nuts. He had pockets and pockets full of them, and he happened to fling a nutshell over the hedge, and it hit a wery fine hare and killed it. Wasn't that strange now?

Happy never owned a wagon. He and his wife travelled all their lives with a pack-donkey and a tent. One night their tent took fire, and in a little while they had nothing left in the world save the donkey and its blinkers. The next morning, as they crept out from under the hedge, Happy said to his wife, "We shall have to beg wery hard to-day." By the evening they had done so well that they had provided themselves with an entirely new outfit. Under the hedge stood the finest tent you ever saw.

Inside it were new blankets, new bedding, new everything.

"Well, my Becky, how do you like it?"

"We haven't done so badly after all, my Happy. We've got a better tent and a better supper than we had last night."

"And I'm thinking, my Becky," said Happy, laughing softly, "that it's wonderful like getting married again."

Happy was once going along a road over the Peak o' Derby. He hadn't gone far before he saw a cart full of the very best china, delicate stuff all coloured and gilded, and between the shafts stood a fine horse with silver-plated harness. There they were on the wayside grass and nobody with them. Happy lit his pipe and waited a bit to see if their owner came along. But nobody came. So he led the horse and cart to an inn just round the bend of the road, and asked the landlord if he knew who was the owner, but he didn't know. On and on went Happy, up hill and down dale, inquiring everywhere for the owner of the horse and pot-cart, but nowhere could he light on the gentleman, though he nearly broke his heart with anxiety in trying his best to find him.

Happy one day took his dog a-hunting. Two hares started up, but the dog couldn't run after both of them at once. Just then, however, the dog ran

against a scythe-blade and cut itself in two. One half of the dog ran after one hare and caught it. The other half of the dog ran after the second hare and caught it. The hares were brought to Happy's feet. Then the two halves of the dog came together again. And the dog died. Happy took off the skin and patched his knee-breeches with it. Just a year afterwards, to the very day, his breeches burst open and barked at him.

CHAPTER XXI

THE GYPSY OF THE HILLS—IN THE HEART OF WALES—A WESTMORLAND HORSE-FAIR

I

May 12.—Just as I stepped out of the train at Corwen, thick vapours, blotting out the mountains, made up their minds to let down rain. Five years before, on landing at the same station, it was only to find a tornado howling over the land and heavy rain falling. That wild night I'm not likely to forget in a hurry. . . .

At last, after an hour's wait in a snug hostelry, I set off along the Holyhead Road, having a certain encampment in my mind's eye. At the "Goat" Inn, where the by-road turns off for Bettws-Gwerfil-Goch, I made inquiry for the said camp, but the landlord only shook his head. One of his daughters, however, hearing my question, said she knew where it was, and coming with me to the door indicated the whereabouts of the caravans of my quest. By now the rain had ceased, and, in a few moments, round a bend in the highway, the outline of a Gypsy tent, with a caravan and a tilt-cart standing near it, caught my eye against a row of twisted oaks in a wayside

field. On entering the camp there were hearty greetings from Gilderoy Gray and Oli Purum, his travelling pal. The ruddy glow in the fire-bucket made the tent's interior an inviting spot for tea, and there was plenty of fun that evening. Outside: the dark night with a roaring wind in the oak trees. Within: a wood-fire lit up the red blankets stretched over the curved tent-rods, and upon a well-made couch of straw (covered with rugs) we reclined. Oli was in fine form for tale-telling, and his pipe often went out. Gilderoy, too, had heaps of things to tell. Was ever a lover of the road better stocked with anecdotes than he?

In the tilt-cart I made my bed, and slept as soundly as a dormouse.

May 13.—At 5 a.m. the sun was shining gloriously upon the mountains. Wash and breakfast in the open air. In the forenoon we three took the hilly road leading to Bettws-Gwerfil-Goch. A light breeze from off the mountains carried the smell of spring everywhere. The birds were all a-twitter in the leafing woods. Blue speedwells, white stars of stitchwort, bee-haunted gorse bloom—all turned to salute the sovereign sun glowing down upon the land. Gilderoy, ever a good walker, was soon pegging on ahead; then at a stile in a hedge he would wait until Oli and I came up. Just below the village of Bettws-Gwerfil-Goch, we stood on the *puri porj* (old bridge) and watched the trout leap in the vandyke-brown pools of the river Alwen. On to the "Hand"

tavern, my ideal village inn. George Borrow saw the interiors of many such houses during his tramps through "Wild Wales." Nor are we likely to forget the kindness we received at the home of a certain great Scholar-Gypsy and Gypsy-Scholar, perched upon a high point commanding a magnificent landscape.

About tea-time a jolly face appeared at our tent door, announcing the arrival of Gil'roy's brother Jim, and, just as dusk was enfolding the scene, a merry boy came bounding into the camp. This was Deborah Purum's Willy, who told us that Bala Fair was to take place on the morrow. Lively indeed was our camp this evening, for had not our company increased by two? Resolving to set off in good time toward Bala in the morning, we slipped into our beds about midnight, and soon forgot to listen to the owls hooting mournfully in the woods.

May 14.—A white mist on the mountains foretold a fine day, and by 6.30 we were breakfasting on trout and bacon done over a wood fire. Then harnessing the mare to the tilt-cart, we all climbed aboard, and away we rattled towards Bala. The wayside woods were empurpled with hyacinths, and on the hedge-banks little bushes of bilberry hung out their crimson flowers. Oli Purum, who is half a Welsh Gypsy, could tell us the very names of the families who had camped round the black patches on the roadsides. Springing off the cart, he would examine the heaps of willow-peelings with a critical



OLI PURUM.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]



A GYPSY HARPIST.

Photo, W. Ferguson.]]

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eye. "*Áwa*, (yes) I thought so. It's some of the Klisons (Locks) that's been *hatshin akai* (stopping here)." A splendid trotter, our mare made light work of pulling the tilt-cart over those seventeen miles down the vale to Bala. Of course we were all wondering as to the Gypsies we might see at the fair. What a crowd of farm-folk we found filling the streets on our arrival. Just in front of the "White Lion" hostelry, I saw a potter-woman standing before a spread of crockery of all shapes and sizes on the side of the road, and, curiously enough, I had once met her son, Orlando Fox, at Bristol.

Little did we dream, however, of the surprise awaiting us here in Bala. Elbowing our way through the dense crowd, it was Gilderoy who was the first to exclaim, "*Dik odoi*" (Look there), and turning our gaze that way, there, sure enough, was a very dark old Gypsy with grizzled locks and glittering black eyes. His garments were weathered by long wear amid the mountains, and in him I recognized the patriarchal Matthew (a descendant of Abraham Wood) whom I had met some years before.

The Woods preserve many stories of Abraham, their earliest known progenitor, who flourished about the beginning of the eighteenth century. Entering Wales from Somerset, he brought with him a violin, and is supposed to have been the first to play upon one in the Principality. According to tradition, "He always rode on a blood-horse, would not sleep in the

open but in barns, wore a three-cocked hat with gold lace, a red silk coat, a waistcoat embroidered with green leaves, had half-crowns for buttons on his coat, sported white breeches gaily decked with ribbons, pumps with silver buckles and spurs, a gold watch and chain, and two gold rings." Many of Abraham's descendants are excellent players on the harp, and all, without exception, speak pure, deep, inflected Romany, akin to the beautiful musical dialect spoken by the Gypsies of Eastern Europe. Angling all summer, fiddling or harping all winter, such is the life of the Gypsy Woods of Wales.

It was with joy that we rambled with Matty along the shore of Bala Llyn, a glittering mirror in the sunshine broken only by rings made by rising fish. The windless day of summerlike quality induced our little party to loiter by the lake, and when at length we turned to come away, there on the road stood a Romany lass with her little brother, as merry a pair as ever wore Gypsy togs. To me it was very delightful to hear their fluent Welsh Romany.

There was no difficulty in persuading Matty to accompany us to our camp at Maerdy. He seemed only too glad to escape into the sweet open country after the close atmosphere of the town streets. And how the mare did travel after her feed and rest! On and on up the mountain road we went, startling the horned sheep on the unfenced roadsides. Now and then Matty would point out the spots where his old folks used to camp. Well away from the town, we

took a bite of bread and cheese at a tiny white inn backed by a strip of pine forest, from whose shadows darted a grey sheep-dog almost wolf-like in its leanness of figure and sharpness of nose. What a penetrating bark it had too!

A few more miles of rough road, with here a lone farm and there a cottage with lumps of white spar on its window-ledges, brought us once again to the "Cymro," Maerdy, where we encountered a funny horse-breaker, reminding one of Borrow's gossipy ostlers. Oli Purum's tricks here "took the cake," and to the delight of his audience he kept up a constant stream of them.

To-night we felt that fate had been extraordinarily kind to us, as by the fire we sat listening to Matty's weird tales and to Oli's rendering of "The Shepherd of Snowdon" and other Welsh airs on his violin. A rare stock of tales has Matty—stories replete with enchanted castles, green dragons, witches, ghosts, and the hero is nearly always a clever Gypsy named Jack. Matty is Oli's cousin, and it is charming to see how happy they are together.

To me this is a holiday indeed. The utter absence of conventionality, and the diversions of the Gypsy life, are as balm to one's nerves.

May 15.—To-day is another blue and golden foretaste of summer. Along the banks of the Alwen, dodging in and out among huge boulders, climbing fences, scrambling through the masses of flowering gorse and broom, Gilderoy, Matty, and I made our

way to Bettws-Gwerfil-Goch. In the old inn, a cool retreat after the broiling sunshine in the wooded valley, we sat awhile. Years ago I saw Matty and his sons dance on the blue-stone floor of this room, just after the New Year had come in—a time when all Welsh folk are merry with fiddle and song.

On getting back to our camp in the early evening, all hands set to work, some gathering sticks, others fetching water, and soon the supper was spread inside the roomy tent. Tales and talk till the late-rising moon glinted through the holes nibbled by field-mice in the tent blankets. Then to dreamland.

May 16.—This morning I find thin ice on a pail of water standing in the open. How bracing to complete your toilet in the cool air from the mountains. See with what tenderness the sunlight colours the rocks up there by the hillside farmstead. For the first time since coming into Wales I hear the cuckoo calling in the woods. High up on the slope I see a black horse dragging a hurdle with thorn boughs weighted by stones—a primitive harrow. I'll have a scamper down the road through the keen air of morn, before the sun has drunk up all the dew.

After breakfast I go a-fishing. Home in the afternoon to find some of the Gypsy Locks coming down the Holyhead Road with their carts and ponies; a delightful party, and much *rokerben* (conversation) followed.

A little later Gilderoy and I drive in the tilt-cart to Corwen to fetch Fred o' the Bawro Gav.



A HAPPY PAIR.

Photo, W. Ferguson.]



A CHAT BY THE GATE.

Photo, W. Ferguson.]

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This means more fun for us round the evening fire. When depressed in days to come, I want to remember that flow of Gypsy mirth away there under the shadow of Cader Dinmael, while the oak-groves outside our tent whispered in the rising wind of night.

May 17.—Farewell, tent and caravan and tilt-cart. Farewell, old pals beside your smoking fires. Farewell, sweet Wales and your beautiful mountains. To-day I return to civilization.

Oli Purum drove me to Corwen station, and by night I am at home again on the Wolds of Lincolnshire.

II

September 27.—We are at Sedbergh, a little grey town at the foot of the Yorkshire Fells. Stone walls, narrow streets, old inns—all have their outlines softened by the mellow shadows, half-golden, half-brown, stealing over the place this afternoon. Looking out from a tavern window I experience a thrill. There in the street stand two vehicles, a *vâdo* and a tilt-cart, with sleek horses between their shafts. That tilt-cart I should know anywhere, for under its weathered hood I have dreamt happy dreams.

“I say, pals, we must be stirring. Come along,” exclaims Gilderoy Gray, rising from his corner on the smooth-worn settle. We follow our leader into the street, and, boarding those vehicles, we are not long in getting clear of Sedbergh town. Bound for Brough Hill Horse-Fair, our party of six never had

a gayer prospect. Here we are on the road again—Gil'roy, Merry Jim, Fred o' the Bawro Gav, Oli Purum, his son Willy, and the Gypsy's Parson. . . .

But even the brightest of September days must wane, and soon to right and left of us dark ridges lift themselves against the fading light. Our first stage is a short one. Nightfall sees us pull up at Cautley Crag, where we seek a stopping-place in the small croft adjoining the lonely white inn on the roadside. However, the gate proves too narrow to admit our carts, so we draw upon the wayside turf, under the shelter of a stone wall. Nimble as ever, Oli erects the red blanket tent in the croft, and Willy busies himself in building a good fire. When an abundance of brown bracken has been laid down in the tent (no fresh straw is to be had), the customary rugs are spread and we sit down to supper. Pipes and chatter make the evening hours fly. There is so much Gypsy news to talk over. At last, having placed a warning lantern, like a pendant star, on one of the carts, we tumble into our beds and quickly fall asleep.

September 28.—A keen, clear autumn morn making you feel how good it is to be alive. After pottering about the camp, Gilderoy and I wander along the bank of the roaring Rawthey, while Jim and Fred, lured by the shine and glamour of the sunlit mountains, set off across the dewy moor for a closer look at the "Spout," as the waterfall up the dingle is described on the map. Down by the plank-bridge I stand and look at the fells all a-shimmer in the sun.

Far up beyond the region of stone walls, built (says our Oli) in the days when labourers received a wage of a penny a day, one's eye follows the forms of mountain ponies, horned sheep, and a couple of shepherds roaming with their dogs. Nearer, on the river-bank, are small companies of geese preening their feathers in the sunshine. I hear from our landlord that prowling hill-foxes sometimes snap up a goose on the moor. . . .

Breakfast over, we were busy packing when some of the Whartons (Oli's relations) passed by in their light accommodation carts *en route* for Brough Fair, so Oli and Willy must needs rush out to gather the latest news of the road. This meant a trifling delay in our getting off, for Gypsies are loquacious. However, by 9.30 we were once more "on travel," feeling blithe as larks. Rumble-rumble went the wheels on the road, and all was going as merry as a marriage bell until a single magpie flitted across our track. Observing the bird of ill-omen, I quoted the old-time ditty—

"One for sorrow, two for mirth,
Three for a wedding, four for a birth."

"That's only an old woman's tale," quoth the Gypsy, flicking the horse's glossy back with the ends of the reins. Yet, a mile or so farther on, Oli was the first to discover that the horse had cast a shoe. Handing over the reins, the lithe Gypsy went off at a trot, and not long after he came up flaunting the lost

shoe, just as the smith at Court Common was ready, tools in hand, to put it on.

Under the lee of a wood of bronzed beeches we made a stick fire to warm the stew-pot, while the smith replaced the shoe amid an interested group of yokels who had popped up from goodness knows where.

The wonderfully transparent atmosphere of this region appears to possess magnifying powers, for even the poultry on the distant knolls assume the forms of huge birds, and as for the gaunt lady who sat "taking the air" on a lonesome bench half a mile away, she would have passed right enough for the wife of Goliath, if that celebrity ever possessed a missis.

In a locality like this, romance and poetry meet one at every turn. A commonplace duck-pond in a grassy hollow does not, perhaps, suggest the glamorous things of life; yet the small tarn lying before us in the sunshine is the subject of a curious local legend. Here, says tradition, you are treading upon fairy ground, for in this dimple in front of the beech wood you have a *bottomless pool*!

As for yon grey house amid the trees on the common's upper edge, well, the man for whom it was built lived in it but a day and died, and over the doorway somebody has inscribed the text, "Occupy till I come."

Soon after quitting the common, Wild Boar Fell begins to mark the skyline on our right, and now all around us lies a realm of strewn rocks—

"Craggs, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurled,
The fragments of an earlier world."



'NEATH CAUTLEY CRAG.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]



A BOTTOMLESS POOL.

Photo, Fred Shaw.]

[To face p. 272.]

A stiff push up the inclines brought us at last to the high point from whence the road dipped into the long straggling town of Kirkby-Stephen. Verily the place seemed to have dropped asleep in the September sun. With as little delay as possible we held on our way until, by 5 p.m., we had made Warcop and had pitched behind the farmhouse where we had stayed on previous happy occasions.

With all hands to work, the tent was put up in record time, and as the ruddy sundown tinged the tree boles near our camp, we gathered round the fire for the evening meal. Thus closed a superb summerlike day.

September 29.—Somewhere about 7 a.m. a whiff of tobacco smoke comes curling pleasantly round the edge of our bunk in the tilt-cart, and I become aware that my bedmate, Fred o' the Bawro Gav, is dressing. "There's a heavy dew this morning," says he, turning back the coverings at the entrance of the cart; and in a little while I am up and washing outside, and perceive for myself that the cobwebs on the hedge are delicately jewelled with drops of dew. "Look at the calves," says Fred, "pretty fellows, aren't they?" My companion has quite a farmer's eye for things, and as a weather-prophet he rarely makes a mistake. Overhead low clouds are rolling, or rather masses of dove-coloured mist, with patches of blue sky showing between, and already the mountains rising to the north are richly bathed in sunshine.

During the forenoon Gilderoy, Fred, and I

stretch our legs in a stroll upon the sunlit "Hill," where the Gypsies are encamped in considerable numbers for the morrow's great horse-fair. Many familiar faces greet us on every hand. Now it is Pat Lee who springs out from a group and nearly twists off Fred's hand, so vigorous is the shaking it receives, and now I am honoured by an invitation to test the weight of Femi Coleman's new baby. From the doorway of a gorgeous *vádo* Sophia Lovell thrusts out her black poll and inquires after our Oli. In this manner, with many variations, we make our way between the camps, and our ramble proves enjoyable in every way.

Going back to the wagons at Warcop, we drop into an inn, and by a bit of luck it happens that a "character" is present in the person of "Fiddling" Billy Williams, the wandering minstrel, who at our request takes his brown violin from a bag on his back and plays some lively airs, and Oli and Willy Puum, who have turned up, dance cleverly to a tune or two on the smooth-worn, blue-stone floor. But Old Billy—I cannot take my eyes off him. Look at his weathered coat (a gift from Lord Lonsdale) which in the course of years has lost its nap and shows here and there patches of a ruddy lower layer; surely the nondescript garment suits the grizzled old wanderer to perfection. Watching him closely, I observe that he has a very passable acquaintance with the Gypsy tongue, so, edging towards him, I drop a deep sentence into his ear. How he starts! "You know something," says he. Then he goes on to tell me that as a boy



Photo, Fred Shaw.]

A WANDERING MINSTREL.

[To face p. 274.]

he travelled with no less renowned a personage than John Roberts, the Welsh Gypsy harpist. Here's a find. Who ever expected to meet a pupil of Old Janik's in a remote Westmorland inn? Billy says that Roberts taught him how to "scrape music off these things," twanging the fiddle-strings with a forefinger, and smiling sweetly as he does it. For myself, I count this meeting with Fiddling Billy one of the "events" of our trip.

In the evening we again rambled on the "Hill" to see a memorable sight—hundreds of Gypsy fires with rings of dark figures squatting around the blazing logs. A feast for the eyes of a lover of the nomads was this array of firelit faces set against a background of caravans, stone walls, and mountains.

September 30.—A fine morning with a cool wind blowing from the east. As we sat at breakfast, a clatter of hoofs on the road announced belated arrivals for the fair. Early in the forenoon we found ourselves in the thick of the crowd, which, to me, seemed as big as ever on Brough Hill. Once upon a time this fair used to last a whole week, much more indeed for the Gypsy element, but nowadays the last day of September and the first day of October are the only recognized dates. Drove of fell ponies took up a large space on the fair-ground. A few heavy horses and a sprinkling of "bloods" met the eye at times. For one thing we could see our Gypsy friends busy upon their "native heath," for where is a Gypsy at home if it is not at a horse-fair?

As evening approached, an ugly bank of inky-black cloud came over the mountains, and the wind in rude gusts began to wail, Valkyrie-like, in the tree-tops, and to shake our wagons in a way that reminded one of a night at sea. Thus the day which had opened so gaily ended in real "Brough weather."

An authority on that local phenomenon known as the "Helm" wind writes: "The field of its operation extends from near Brough for a distance of perhaps thirty miles down the Eden Valley towards Carlisle, and is sharply restricted to the belt lying between the Pennines and the river; never, on the one hand, being encountered on the actual summit of the range, and never, on the other, crossing the water. Bitterly cold, it rushes like a tornado down the slope, and works havoc in the valley below. If the "Helm" happens to blow during the fair, the proprietors of scores of refreshment tents may usually bid farewell to all the canvas they possess."

The Gypsies, to whom I have ever mentioned the "Helm" wind at Brough, invariably shrug their shoulders, as if it were an old friend, and not a very welcome one at that.

October 1.—We were all afoot in good time this morning, six o'clock or thereabouts, and right glad we were to see the sun breaking through the mists over Brough Fox Tower. Taking a halter apiece, Fred and I went to fetch the horses. Breakfast; then we packed, and away we went. "Good-bye, old camping-place," we said, as the wagons reached the



BROUGH HILL HORSE FAIR.

Photo, Valentine.

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Musgrave ramper, for very pleasant had been our sojourn by the spreading trees beyond the old farmhouse. On the way to Kirkby-Stephen, many light carts rattled past, going south, and, after the stiff pull out of the town, it was good to be once more on the open road with the keen mountain air blowing on our faces from over wide leagues of rocks and heather.

By early evening we had reached Cautley, where, as before, we drew on to the strip of wayside turf, and in quick time a couple of plump fowls were roasting in the black pot over a wood fire. To watch Oli prepare and cook those fowls was an object-lesson to be remembered. Bravo, Oli, our Romany chef!

Realizing that this was our last evening in the wilds, we were in no hurry to get between the blankets. So we stretched out the tales, and meandered leisurely through the fields of reminiscence, while the cloud of tobacco smoke grew denser around us, and the stars o' night shone more and more brightly over Cautley's black crag.

October 2.—Up at seven to find the sky almost free from clouds and holding out the promise of a brilliant wind-up. After breakfast we set off for Lancaster, near whose castle we parted; and now, over fireside pipes, my notebook and its jottings possess the power to make every sight and sound of the journey live again.

CHAPTER XXII

FURZEMOOR

ARE you seeking a recipe for youth? Go a-Gypsying. Forth to the winding road under the open sky, the Gypsies are calling you. Scorning our hurrying mode of life, these folk are content to loiter beneath the green beeches, or in the shadow of some old inn on the fringe of a windy common. Like Nature herself, these wildlings of hers overflow with the play-spirit and therefore remain ever youthful. To rub shoulders with them, I have found, is to acquire a laughing indifference to dull care and all its melancholy train. Whoever then would grow light-hearted and become just a happy child of sun and star and stream, let him respond to the call of the road: let him go a-Gypsying.

Long ago I observed that during the pleasanter months of the year a few families of wanderers were generally to be found encamped upon a secluded waste—which I will call Furzemoor—where, by the courtesy of the owner, they were allowed to remain as long as they pleased. They resorted thither, so it seemed to me, to recuperate from the effects of their

winter's sojourn upon the city ash-patches hemmed in by unsavoury gas-lit streets.

One April afternoon, following close upon a lengthy stay in London, I remember how blithely I tramped along the grassy cart-track, which, after winding between hedgerows full of green sprays, sweet odours and tinkling bird - notes, emerged upon rugged Furzemoor—one of those few places which in after years become for you backgrounds of dream-like delight by reason of the memories associated with them. Is it not to such spots that the fancy turns when the mood of the commonplace hangs heavily upon you, and any shred of adventure would be more stirring to the heart than "the cackle of our burg," which is too often mistaken for "the murmur of the world"?

No matter how often I came, the moor had ever the power to stir one's imagination anew by its suggestive atmosphere of the remote, the aloof, the wild; and having paused at the end of the lane to renew old recollections, I went forward and peered over the edge of a declivity fringed with bushes of furze in golden flower. Ah! there below the slope, kissed by the warm sun and fanned by the breath of spring from off the heath, lay the brown tents, tilt-carts, and smouldering fires of a Romany camp, looking strangely deserted save for a girlish figure reclining near one of the fires over which a kettle was slung. Pushing between the bushes, my blundering feet loosened some large stones which rolled

down the bank with a rattle, causing the girl to look sharply over her shoulder, and simultaneously from her red lips came a warning whistle, a shrill penetrating note first ascending then dropping again. I had heard that whistle of old and knew well its significance. In response thereto a Gypsy man appeared from behind the tents, his keen eyes gleaming with recognition. "Hey, *rashai*, we's been a-talking about you lately. Only last night I was saying, p'raps our pass'n will be coming to see us one of these days, and here you are!"

Such was the greeting I got from Gypsy Sam, who now wheeled about and walked me off to a sandy hollow where his wife Lottie and her bairns sat by the fire. On catching sight of me, the children—a black-eyed troop—raised a shout of welcome, and, like little savages, soon began tugging at my coat tails. After an absence of several months from the camping-place this was a joyful meeting, and I guessed that my friends had much news to tell.

"It's no use pretending to offer you a chair," said Lottie, giving my hand a hearty shake, "for we haven't got one. If there's anything I does detest, it's chairs. The nasty things make sich draughts about 'ur legs." So, squatting on the ground, I awaited the unfolding of the family budget.

There was a touch of the Orient on every side. Stuck in the wind-rippled sand under a bold wall of rock were curved tent-rods with brown blankets pinned round them. Between the golden furze-



PHOTO-ILLUSTRATIONS BUREAU

GYPSY CHILDREN.



clumps a lean horse and a shaggy ass ripped the grasses. A greyhound lay asleep under a tilt-cart upon the shafts of which sundry gay garments were hanging to dry. Upon this picture my eye rested with pleasure.

Now Gypsy Sam ignites his tobacco by scooping up a red ember with the bowl of his pipe. His wife does the same, and I follow suit.

"A prettier place is this," quoth Lottie, "than when you see'd us under that ugly railway bank at Hull."

Verily the Gypsies are possessed of an æsthetic sense, and their roving eyes grow wistful as they take in the beauty of the distant hills and the sun-gleams lighting up grassy knolls and spindly fir-trees rising from patches of sand.

"You remember that *pawno grai* (white horse) of ours?" says Sam. "Well, we lost him a little while back. A bit of *wafro bok* (bad luck) that was for us. We was stopping at a place with nasty bogs around us, and one stormy night the *grai* got into one of 'em unbeknown to we, and i' the morning we found him with no more than his nose sticking out. Of course he were dead as a stone. Then there was that *kawlo jukel* (black dog) what you saw at Hull—brother to this one under the cart—he got poisoned up yonder by Rotherham. I reckon a keeper done it as had a spite agen us. I wouldn't ha' parted with that dog for a good deal; he's got us many a rabbit."

The steaming splutter of the kettle suggests a

meal, which is soon spread in winsome style. Meanwhile, from another fire hard by, a black pot is brought, and a savoury stew is followed by tea and slices of buttered bread with green cresses fresh from the brook. As Lottie lifts the silver teapot to pour out tea, I cannot help admiring the lovely old thing, and the Gypsy sees my appreciation.

"Yes," (holding it up in the sunlight), "it's a beauty, ain't it? Did you ever hear of my Aunt Jōni's quart silver teapot? Squire Shandres used to fix greedy eyes on it whenever he come down to the camp, but my aunt wouldn't part with it, not likely. You won't remember Jōni, of course. A funny old woman she were, to be sure. There was one thing I minds her a-telling of us. She'd been out with her *kipsi* (basket) but it weren't one of her good days, and by night her basket was nearly as heavy as when she'd set out. Twopence was all she'd made, as she passed through three or four willages, tumble-down sort of places, where the house walls were bent and the thatches of the cottages were sinking into the rooms underneath 'em. At one of these cottages as stood in an odd corner, Jōni stopped to knock. Two steps led up to a green door with a bird-cage hanging outside. She waited a minute, but, as nobody came she gave two more raps and tried the door. It was bolted. After that she heard sounds inside, a muttering voice came nearer, and slip-slap went the shoes, as an old woman opened the door. Talk about ugly, she was that, if you like; and there was hair growing on her lip and

chin. Fixing her black eyes on Jōni, she scowled and scolded, and, pointing a finger at her, she cursed poor Jōni, and for ten days afterwards my aunt couldn't speak proper. Whenever she tried to talk, she could only groan and bark and moo like the beasts, and it wasn't till after the tenth day that she were herself at all."

From witches it was not a long leap to wise men.

Said Lottie, "Did I ever tell you about the wise man of Northampton? Well, it was one time as I'd had wery bad luck indeed with my basket. I couldn't sell nothing at all in the willages agen that town, but I know'd a *gozvero mush* (wise man) as lived there, so I went to see him, and he give me a rabbit's head and a cake of bread. 'Now,' says he, 'go you and call at the places where you've took nothing, and you'll take money at all of 'em.'

"And what he told me came true, every word of it. I'll take my sacrium oath it did. That there *gozvero mush* (wise man) could tell the names of folks as had stolen things, and he could *dūker* (tell fortunes) like one of us. He could tell folk a lot about theirselves by rubbing his hand over the bumps on their heads, and he could read the stars like a book, and find out things by the cards and by the crystal. He was sort of friendly with our people, and they liked him, but they would never go near a witch if they knew it."

It has been truly said, "No one is fond of

Gypsies, but is fonder of Gypsy children." Grave-eyed pixies, at once bold and reserved, these quaint little sprites are simply irresistible. When the meal is over, I stroll off with a party of these romping rascals towards a gorsy hollow which the sun warms into a gayer gold. Asking the children if they would like a tale, and what sort? Answer comes, "A *muleno gudlo*" (fairy tale).

"How long?"

"A mile long, in course."

Into my tale creeps a ghost, and when I had done, little Reuben says—

"I know something about *mulos* (ghosts). One time a man was killed by a bull at the corner of the lane down yonder, and we allus hurries past that place for fear of *dikin* his *mulo*" (seeing his ghost). "And then there was two Gypsies as father once know'd. They begged some straw from a farmer and put it in a little shed for to sleep on. Then they went into the willage to buy a loaf, and when they got back they found the straw had gone. A little ways off they see'd a woman running away with the straw, but 'stid of follering her they went straight to the farmhouse where they'd got leave to sleep in the shed, and they told the farmer about the woman, and he says—

"'Why, that's my old woman as died ten year ago.' My word, those Gypsies soon began to look out for a sleeping-place somewhere else. Yes, we knows a lot about *mulos*,"

"What's that noise?" asked one of the girls, springing up.

"Come away *tshavê* (children). Come away, sir. Don't you hear that nasty little *sap*" (snake)?

From among the mossy stones near at hand came a hissing sound, and there, sure enough, was a small viper wagging his black-forked tongue at us. We got up and moved nearer the camp.

"Norfolk's the place for sarpints," said one of the boys; "I once see one with a frog in its mouth. Lor, how the poor thing did squeal. There's lots of lizards about here, and they say that a *hotshi* (hedgehog) will eat 'em, but if I thought *that* I'd never touch no more *hotshi* s'long as I live."

I told the children of a little incident which had happened on my way to Furzemoor, how I had cycled into a family of weasels crossing the road but didn't run over any of them, and, dismounting, I banged one of the little fellows with my hat. He lay still, and I thought he was dead, but when I turned my head for a moment he was gone like a flash. Lottie, who had drawn near and was listening, remarked—

"It's bad luck to meet a wezzel on the *drom* (road), but if there's anything we does like to meet, it's the Romany *tshiriklo* (bird)," which I knew to be the pied wagtail, the foreteller of coming Gypsies.

"When we sees our *tshiriklo* on the road, and it flies, we knows we are going to meet Gypsies who'll be akin to us, but if it only runs away, the travellers coming will be strangers. One day me and my man

was on the *drom* and we see a young hare tumbling over and over in front of us. That's a sign as means ill, and, sure enough, a few days after we heard tell of the death of my man's uncle 'Lijah. Talking about meeting things, I've heard it said that if you meet two carts, one tied behind t'other, you'll soon go to prison."

The strains of a fiddle now proceeded from where Sam sat alone by the fire, and we joined him. As the sun was going down one of the girls proposed a dance, and soon a merry whirl of Gypsy elves enlivened the camp. By the fireside, reminiscences came crowding into Sam's brain.

"Many's the time, as you know, we've draw'd on to this place, and I takes good care to be friendly with all the keepers round here. I never meddles wi' nothink, you see, so we never gets across wi' 'em. Ay, but I minds when I didn't used to be so pertikler. See that oak wood up yonder? In my young days me and my old mammy got leave from a keeper to gather acorns in that wood. Us used to take 'ur sacks and fill 'em with acorns and sell 'em to a man as we know'd. And mam 'ud warn me not to meddle with the rabbits, lest we should be forbid to stop on here. One afternoon mam had half-filled her sack, and when her back was turned, I tumbled the acorns out, and slipped into the sack three rabbits as I'd knocked over, and I put the acorns back on the top of 'em. I was a good big lad then, and, my, wasn't I frit when I see the keeper coming with

his dog. When he got up to us, he and mam got a-talking, and I see the dog sniffing round the bag. The keeper, thinking that there was only acorns in it, shouts to the dog, "Come away there." But the dog stuck there, and I was trembling in my boots for fear we should get into trouble. Howsiver, the keeper kept calling the dog off, and soon they goes away. Then I nips up the bag and trots off home with it, and when I told mam about it afterwards she gave me a downright good scolding and begged me never to do it no more.

"Our old folks allus travelled with pack-donkeys, and they had one donkey as was a wery knowing animal. I'll tell you one thing it did. We was stopping in a lane of a summer's evening, and our *foki* (people) was smoking afore the fire under a hedge with the children playing round, and everybody was as happy as the Lord in Heaven, but all at once our *maila* (donkey) comes and pokes its head atween daddy and me, and I taps it on the nose, playful-like, to send it away, but it comes back, and it was that restless and fidgety, poking and pulling at us—it wouldn't be druv off. My mammy had been watching it from the tent, and she come up and says—

" 'That *maila* knows summut, I reckons.'

" 'Ay, it's a sign sure enough,' says daddy. And the donkey still kep' on poking and pulling at us. Long and by last dad says—

" 'We'd better clear out of here,' for he thought

there was summut queer about the donkey's goings on. Well, we pulled up the tent rods and packed 'ur things, and we'd only just got out of the lane when two horsemen come along and began inquiring about a little pig as was missing from a farm. They made us unpack, and they searched through everythink, but, of course, they couldn't find nothink agen us, and they goes their way and we goes ours. And that night, after we had settled down in an old quarry a bit further on, my daddy beckoned me and took me to a deep hollow full o' dead leaves, and, scrabbling among 'em, he takes out—what do you think? The nicest little *bawlo* (porker) you ever see'd, and we gets it safe home. That donkey *did* know summut after all. Ay, them were the old times. Things is verry different now.

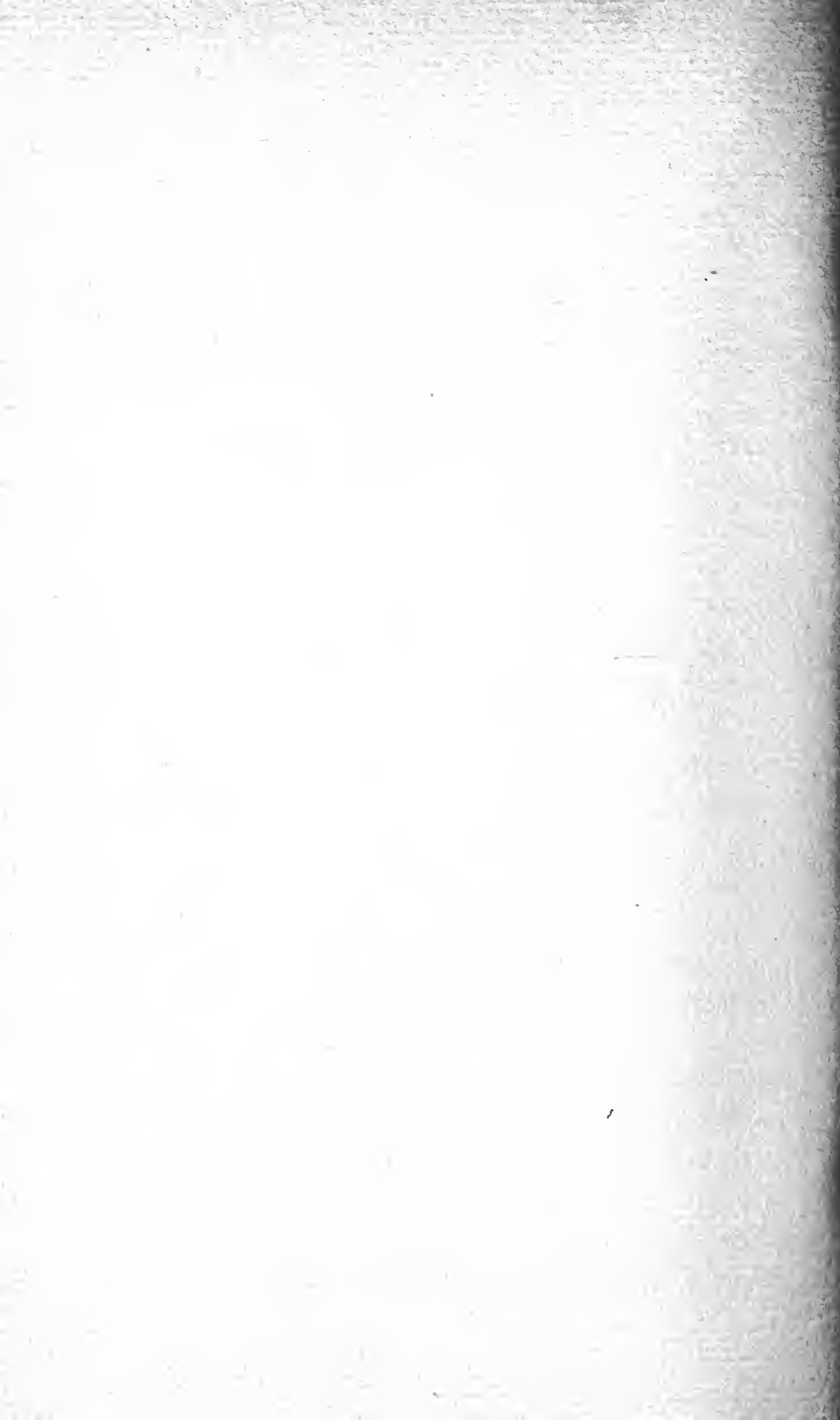
“If you come here to-morrow you'll mebbe walk up with me to the planting on t'other side of yon beck. The *rai* as this land belongs to lets me *tshin* (cut) all the *wuzen* (elder) I wants. My old daddy used to say—

“‘You should never lay a chopper to a tree wi'out first axing the fairies' leave,' but folks forgets to do it now.”

The eyes of my friends here began to turn frequently in the direction of the cart-track. Indeed, when their eyes were not looking that way it seemed to me that their minds still were. Nor was this expectancy to go long unsatisfied, for soon there appeared in the sunken lane a black chimney topping

a green-hooded vehicle, a light cart bringing up the rear. These Gypsies turned out to be a married son of Sam, with his wife and family. Here was a jolly arrival. With surprising rapidity the horses were unyoked, and the newcomers were gathered round their parents on the grass. Off to a well-known spring run the girls to fill the kettle and a bucket or two, and the boys scamper off towards a spinney to return with an abundance of dead wood. Then how the fires crackle and spurt, and in next to no time the steam is puffing from kettle spouts.

Feeling ten years younger for my visit to the Furzemoor Gypsies, I climbed up the deeply-rutted lane on the way to the distant railway station, and, as I turned for a last look, brown hands were waving, and *kushto bok* (good luck), which is the Gypsy's "good-bye," was shouted after me. On my part I felt a strong tugging at the heart when, at a bend in the lane, I caught a farewell glimpse of the domed tents, upcurling blue smoke, and happy Gypsies among the golden gorse.



GLOSSARY

PRONUNCIATION ¹

I. VOWEL-SOUNDS

â	.	.	.	.	.	.	as in	alms (âms).
a	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	aloe (alô).
aw	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	all (awl).
ê	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	ale (êl).
è	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	air (èr).
e	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	ell (el).
î	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	eel (îl).
i.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	ill (il).
ô	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	old (ôld).
o	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	olive (oliv).
û	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	ooze (ûz).
u	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	book (buk).
ù	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	ulcer (ùlsa).

II. DIPHTHONGS

ai	.	.	.	.	.	.	as in	aisle (ail).
oi	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	oyster (oista).
ou	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	ounce (ouns).

III. CONSONANTS

The following are pronounced as in English :—

b, d, f, h, k, l, m, n, p, t, v, w.

v and w are, as a rule, easily interchangeable.

y	.	.	.	.	.	.	as in	yes (yes).
r	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	roam (rôm).
ch	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	loch (Scottish loch).

¹ Taken from *A System of Anglo-Romani Spelling for English Readers and British Printers*, by R. A. Scott Macfie.

s	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	as in	ass (as).
sh	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	shin (shin).
tsh	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	chin (tshin).
z	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	zest (zest).
zh	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	pleasure (plezhur).
j (dzh)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	jest (jest).
g	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	gate (gêt).
ng	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	singer (singa).
ngg	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	finger (fingga).
th	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	thin (thin).
dh	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	„	then (dhen).

VOCABULARY.

ROMANY.	ENGLISH.
Adrê	In, into, within.
Akai	Here.
Apopli	Again.
Aprê	On, upon.
Av	Come.
Âva, âvali, âwa, âwali	Yes, certainly, verily
Avrî	Away, out.
Bâ	Stone, sovereign (£1).
Baiengri	Waistcoat.
Bal	Hair
Balovas	Bacon, ham.
Barvelo	Rich.
Baw	Comrade, mate.
Bawlo	Pig.
Bawro	Great, large.
Bawro-Gav	London.
Beng	Devil.
Besh	Sit, rest, lie.
Bibi	Aunt.
Biken	Sell.
Bitâ	Little.
Bitshado	Sent.
Bitshado-pawdel	Sent over, transported.
Bok	Luck.
Bokro	Sheep.

ROMANY.	ENGLISH.
Bokro-mas	Mutton.
Bongo	Crooked, lame, wrong.
Boshomengro	Fiddler.
Bouri	Snail.
Bouri-zimen	Snail-broth.
Bûdika	Shop.
Dâbla	Exclamation of surprise.
Dadus	Father.
Dai	Mother.
Dawdi	Exclamation of surprise.
Delaben	Gift.
Del-aprê	Read.
Didakai	Half-breed Gypsy.
Dik	See, look.
Dikamengri	Picture, looking-glass.
Diklo	Kerchief.
Dinelo	Fool, simpleton.
Diri	Dear.
Divus	Day.
Dosta	Enough, plenty.
Dova	That.
Drom	Road.
Dûi	Two.
Dûker	Tell fortunes.
Dûkeripen	Fortune.
Dûvel	God.
Fôki	People.
Gad	Shirt.
Gawjikenno	Belonging to gentiles.
Gawjo	Alien, gentile, anyone who is not a Gypsy.
Gav	Town.
Gèro	Man.
Gozvero	Cunning.
Grai	Horse.
Gudlo	Tale, noise.
Guno	Bag, sack.

ROMANY.	ENGLISH.
Hatsh	Stop, camp.
Hatsh-oprê	Arise, get up.
Haw	Eat.
Hawben	A meal, food.
Hěro	Leg, wheel.
Hokano	Lie, trick, swindle.
Hora	Penny.
Hotsherdo	Burnt.
Hotshiwitshi	Hedgehog.
Jaw	Go.
Jin	Know.
Jiv	Live.
Jukel	Dog.
Kai	Where.
Kanengro	Hare.
Kani	Hen.
Kawlo	Black.
Ke-divus	To-day.
Kek, keka	No, not, never.
Kel, kèr	Do, make.
Kèr	House.
Kipsi	Basket.
Kisi	Much.
Kitshima	Tavern, public-house.
Klisin	Lock.
Kokero	Self.
Koliko	To-morrow.
Kom	Love, like.
Kon	Who.
Konaw	Now.
Kongri	Church.
Kopa	Blanket.
Kosht	Stick, wood.
Kova	This, thing.
Krafni	Button.
Kuro	Cup, glass, mug.
Kushto	Good.

ROMANY.	ENGLISH.
Laj	Shame.
Latsher	Find, pick up.
Lav	Word.
Lavengro	Word-man, linguist.
Lel	Get, take.
Len, lendi	Them, their.
Lesti	Him, his.
Levina	Beer.
Lil	Book, paper.
Loli	Red.
Lova	Money.
Maila	Donkey.
Man, mandi	I, me.
Mas	Meat.
Masengro	Butcher.
Maw	Don't.
Maw	Kill, slay, murder.
Mî, mîro, m'o	My, mine.
Mokado	Unclean.
Mokto	Box.
Mol	Wine.
Mong	Beg, pray, request.
Monûshni	Woman, wife.
Mûi	Mouth, face.
Mûk	Let, allow, leave, lend.
Mûleno	Ghostly, fairy, super-natural.
Mûlo	Dead, ghost.
Mûlo-mas	Carrion.
Mûmeli	Candle.
Mumpari, mumper	Low-class traveller.
Mumpli	Nasty.
Mûsh	Man.
Mûskro	Policeman.
Nasher	Lose, waste.
Nongo	Naked, bald, bare.
O	The.
Odoi	There.

ROMANY.	ENGLISH.
Oprê	On, up, upon.
Ora	Hour, watch.
Pal	Brother.
Pâni	Water.
Pariko	Thank.
Patrin	Trail, sign, leaf.
Pawdel	Across, over, beyond.
Pawni	Fair, white.
Pen	Sister.
Pen	Say.
Peser	Pay.
Petulengro	Smith.
Pîro	Foot.
Pogado	Broken.
Poger	Break.
Porj	Bridge.
Posh	Half.
Praster	Run.
Pûker	Tell.
Pûkinger	Magistrate.
Pûri-dai	Grandmother.
Pûro	Old.
Pûrum	Leek.
Pûtsh	Ask.
Pûv	Field.
Pûvengri	Potato.
Rai, raia	Gentleman, sir.
Rakli	Girl.
Rashai	Priest, parson.
Rat	Blood.
Rat, rati	Night.
Rawni	Lady.
Rinkeno	Beautiful.
Rokamiaw	Trousers.
Roker	Talk, speak.
Rokerben	Conversation, speech.
Rom	Husband.

ROMANY.	ENGLISH.
Romanes	Gypsy - wise, Gypsy language.
Romanitshel	Gypsy.
Romano	Gypsy.
Romer	Marry
Rûp	Silver.
Sâ	How.
Sal	Laugh.
Sap	Snake.
Saw	All, everything.
Sawkûmi	Everybody.
Sawla	Morning.
Shan	Are.
Shûkora	Sixpence.
Shûn	Hear.
Shushi	Rabbit.
Sî	Is.
Sig	Quickly, soon, early.
Sô	What.
Sos	Was.
Stari	Star.
Staruben	Prison.
Stor	Four.
Swêgler	Pipe.
Ta	And.
Tâder	Draw.
Tâlê	Down.
Tan	Tent.
Tâno	Young.
Tatsheno	True, genuine.
Tatshipen	Truth.
Tatsho	True.
Te	To.
Tem	Country, land.
Tîro	Your.
Tôv	Wash.
Trash	Frighten.
Trin	Three.

ROMANY.	ENGLISH.
Tshai	Lass, daughter, girl.
Tshavo	Son.
Tshib	Tongue, language.
Tshikli	Dirty, foul.
Tshin	Cut.
Tshiriklo	Bird.
Tshitshi	Nothing.
Tshiv	Put.
Tshokaw	Boots.
Tshor	Steal.
Tshordo	Stolen.
Tshori	Poor.
Tshovihawni	Witch.
Tshûmani	Something.
Tshûpni	Whip.
Tû, tût, tûti	You.
Tûv	Smoke.
Tûvalo	Tobacco.
Vâdo	Caravan, cart.
Vâva	Another.
Vast	Hand.
Vel, wel	Come.
Wafodû, wafro	Bad.
Wesh, vesh	Wood, forest.
Wûser	Throw.
Wûzen	Elder.
Yek	One.
Yog	Fire.
Yoi	She.
Yôra	Egg.
Yov	He.
Zimen	Broth

MUMPER'S PATER

Dunnock	Steer.
Mush-fakir	Umbrella-mender.

GYPSY "FORE" OR CHRISTIAN NAMES.

MASCULINE NAMES.

Airant.	Kaivela.
Aniel.	Kashi.
Artelus.	Khulai.
Baius.	Ladin
Barendon.	Lamerok.
Bartholoways.	Leshi.
Bohemia.	Liberty.
Bosko	Logan.
Boufi.	Loni.
Buzi.	Lumas.
Craimia	Lusha.
Credi.	Mairik.
Dimiti.	Manabel
Dinki.	Manfri.
Doval.	Manful.
Dud.	Mantis.
Duraia.	Meriful.
Dusti.	Moelus.
Eros.	Morpus.
Evergreen.	Moti.
Feli.	Motsha.
Fennix.	Motshan.
Fowk.	Motshus.
Ganation.	Muldobrai.
Glympton.	Nelus.
Golias.	Niabai.
Gōni.	Nipkin.
Gui.	Nitshel.
Haini.	Northalion.
Harkles.	Ōbi.
Harodain.	Ōki.
Hedji.	Ōlbi.
Īnan.	Ōli.
Īthil.	Orferus.
Īza.	Ōseri
Jaina,	Ōthi.

Ōti.
 Penderbela.
 Persuvius.
 Perun.
 Pesulia.
 Pirus.
 Polius.
 Potamus.
 Rabai.
 Raito.
 Renda.
 Righteous.
 Rinki.
 Ruslo.
 Sairenda.
 Santabelphijum.
 Santalina.
 Santanoa.
 Seki.
 Seneptune.
 Shandres.
 Shani.

Shiva.
 Silus.
 Simpronius.
 Solivaino.
 Studivares.
 Swallow.
 Taimi.
 Taiso.
 Teni.
 Thurles.
 Tudlin.
 Tuti.
 Vaina.
 Wacka.
 Waimore.
 Wantelo.
 Wingi.
 Woodlock.
 Yoben.
 Zegul.
 Zezil.

FEMININE NAMES.

Acorn.
 Alamina.
 Andelia.
 Angelis.
 Anis.
 Ashena.
 Ashila.
 Aslog.
 Begonia.
 Bidi.
 Biti.
 Bobum.
 Boina.
 Consuleti.
 Daiena.

Darklis.
 Delaia.
 Delenda.
 Deleta.
 Deloreni.
 Dorenia.
 Edingel.
 Eldorai.
 Elophia.
 Elvaira.
 Emanaiia.
 Erosabel.
 Everilda.
 Ezi.
 Fazenti.

Femi.
Fernet.
Fianci.
Fili.
Florentia.
Fluenzi.
Froniga.
Genti.
Glorina.
Graveleni.
Idadê.
Inji.
Jeta
Jōni.
Kadilia.
Kerlenda.
Kiomi.
Kodi.
Kraisini.
Laini.
Lavaina.
Leanabel.
Lenda.
Leondra.
Levaithen.
Lidi.
Linji.
Liti.
Lurina.
Lusana.
Lwaiden.
Madona.
Maiburi.
Maireni.
Mandra.
Marbeleni.
Melvinia.
Memberensi.
Mezi.
Million.

Mino.
Mireli.
Miselda.
Mitoreni.
Mizereti.
Modiwench.
Morjiana.
Nareli.
Olovina
Omi.
Oshina.
Paizeni.
Paizi.
Pamela.
Penhela.
Perpagelion.
Piki.
Plenti.
Polovine.
Pomona.
Queenation.
Reni.
Repentance
Repriona.
Richenda.
Rodi.
Romania.
Saibarini.
Saiera.
Saifi.
Saiforela.
Saiki.
Sanspirela.
Savaina.
Sedinia.
Seluna.
Seni.
Separi.
Shorensi.
Shuri.

Sibela.
Siberensi.
Sibereti.
Sinaminta.
Sinfai.
Spidi.
Stari.
Suti.
Taishan.
Telaitha.
Tiena.
Traienti.
Treci.
Trelì.
Trenit.

Vashti.
Wadi.
Waini.
Wasti.
Wenti.
Weson.
Whipni.
Widens.
Wigi.
Wuzi.
Yunakrai.
Zebra.
Zina.
Zuba.

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